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# SWAT

SURVIVAL WEAPONS AND TACTICS

DECEMBER 2015

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### NIGHTMARE ON SESAME STREET

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A cautionary tale about vetting every firearms training outfit before committing your hard-earned cash and valuable time to it.

BY DENNY HANSEN

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### TACTICAL TAKEDOWN!

Ruger SR-556TD

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# The Overhyped Headshot

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I recently spent a morning walking around an indoor swap meet. I stopped at one table and was waiting to talk to the man who was selling some guns as he talked to another customer.

The customer was explaining how the only shot he'd ever take in a self-defense situation was a headshot, as it would shut down the bad guy's CSN (sic). He went on to say he'd received this advice from an "instructor." He turned to me and asked if I agreed. OK, fella, you asked....

I told him that in my opinion a headshot would only be effective if a bullet struck in the "T" zone—the area between the eyes and down to the nose. Many people have been struck by bullets on the forehead, only to have them skip off or circle the head. Some have not even been knocked out, leaving them very much in the fight. I have personally seen a bullet ricochet off the brim of a cap.

The man operating the table had a Beretta 92 with a set of Crimson Trace Lasergrips. I asked if I could borrow it for a demonstration. After double and triple checking it to make sure it was clear, I handed it to the customer. Stepping back and holding up my fist, I said, "This is about the size of the brain at five yards. Every time you have a sight picture, activate the laser." I then moved my fist up, down, sideways, and diagonally. The laser never came on.

In real life, the head won't be flat paper, and you won't be standing buckle-to-buckle. Instead, both you and the bad guy will likely be moving. The ground may or may not be flat, and there may be obstacles in the way.

I'm not saying a headshot should never be taken. Sometimes it is indeed the best option. But shooting for center mass is your best bet—and center mass is the largest piece of meat available to you.

This issue comes packaged with the S.W.A.T. 2016 calendar, not available anywhere else. It's included as a "thank you" to our readers and advertisers for your support. The calendar contains important information such as when new issues of S.W.A.T. go on sale, U.S. holidays (no letters to the editor, please!), full moons, when Daylight Saving Time begins and ends, and more. We hope you enjoy it all year long.

Until next time, stay low and watch your back. ☉

*Denny Hansen*

**SWAT**

**EDITORIAL  
INFORMATION**

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### QUESTIONS AND KUDOS

In the *RUNNING THE GUN* article (August 2015 S.W.A.T.), Denny Hansen used a U.S. PALM Defender vest. Was that their AR-15 model or the MOLLE, which he configured himself? Also did he use the carrier only, front armor, or front and rear armor during the class?

Please tell Ethan Johns that I appreciated his article on using NRA B8 repair center targets and the two drills he provided (*TRAINING WITH A CLASSIC: B8 Target Drills*, July 2015 S.W.A.T.).

I tried them at the range last week—the test is humbling! Shots were good, but nowhere near making the time constraints. I was going for nine rounds in nine seconds, and the first pass was 15 seconds. Very helpful to have a benchmark to work toward and find a balance of acceptable accuracy and speed!

Your magazine and *Gun Tests* magazine are truly the two best monthly firearms resources in print. Every month I learn something new. Great job!

A. Cohen, email

*Thanks for your interest and support. My PALM Defender is indeed the AR-15 model. I wore it with both front and rear armor panels.*

*We agree that the drills Ethan has written about are good skill builders.*

*Denny Hansen*



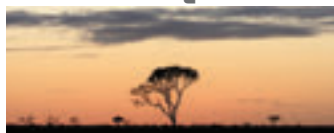
### LIVE FREE

I am deeply troubled by the commentary of two readers in the August 2015 *Mail Room*. In my opinion, their viewpoints are indicative of the very real threat to freedom we face in America today. What's most troubling is that threat comes from within.

First, Mr. Johnson from Kentucky parroted the frequently stated and grossly incorrect belief that "rights" are somehow "granted by the established authority." Thank God Ms. Wolfe pointed out that our rights are not granted, but endowed by our Creator. If one doesn't believe in a Creator, they can consider them natural rights. Rights granted by people are just permission that can be taken away at any time.

In the very next letter, Mr. Mickelson from Illinois asked if "you think you are above the law." You didn't say it, but I certainly will. Yes, I am. Any "law" that is not in keeping with the rights granted to me by my Creator, notably the right to defend myself, in this case with a firearm, is not a law at

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all. Simply because some politician or bureaucrat tells me I cannot use a firearm with a barrel a certain length, or with a device braced against my shoulder, does not make it so. Sure, in doing so, one takes the chance of running afoul of a tyrannical government, but that's a choice each one of us must make and a risk we take.

It has never been more obvious that tyrants can only enslave people with their help. The Holocaust couldn't have happened if the Jews didn't register themselves and willingly walk onto the railcars.

Neither should we willingly assist

those who would persecute or oppress us.

K. Bellone, New York

*Thank you very much for providing us with your thoughts and feedback. I'm told with regularity that the Republic is on the brink of an abyss. With patriots such as you, there is still hope it won't fall in.*

Denny Hansen

#### **RUN, RABBIT, RUN**

I was appalled by Brent Wheat's comments in the October issue (*STREET SMARTS: Run, Rabbit, Run*).

I can't believe he actually advocated running away from a fight rather than engaging the bad guys. No doubt he is also the type who runs for cover when bullets are flying rather than remain erect on his hind legs like a man and stand to fight.

J. Walsh, New Jersey

*Thanks for contacting us and for your opinion.*

*Outside of Internet discussions, I am not familiar with anyone who does not recommend taking cover if they can. Remaining erect and motionless is great for the square range, but it's a good way to have new holes put in your body on the two-way range.*

Denny Hansen

I enjoyed Brent Wheat's October column very much. As he pointed out, police officers and the military are duty bound to engage the gremlins in our society, but the decision not to enter into a conflict if possible is sound advice.

I would only add that not engaging may also be a good idea for an off-duty officer who has no communications or backup and may be mistaken for a bad guy by other responding officers, resulting in a "blue-on-blue" incident. A better choice may be to become a good witness.

R. Pegler, Texas

*Thanks for the feedback.*

*While your suggestion for off-duty officers has some merit, in reality it is unlikely an officer would simply stand by and be a "good witness." With few exceptions, our brave peace officers are hardwired to go toward danger, not away from it.*

#### **TWO PIECES OF SILVER**

I read *Two Pieces of Silver* by Louis Awerbuck in the September issue and would just like to say thank you for reprinting Mr. Awerbuck's column.

D. Pitmon, email

*Thanks for contacting us. All of Louis' columns contain words of wisdom, but this was one of my personal favorites.*

Denny Hansen ☺

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# Simply Rugged Holsters

Everyone wants to have the latest and greatest weapon, thinking that if it's new and costs a lot of money, it will make them a better shot and subsequently turn them into a better tactician. I have seen students on our range who have spent \$1,500 on a pistol and extra mags, and then use a cheap nylon holster that is more like a bucket to drop their pistol in.

In the first place, no amount of money can buy tactical skill—that only

comes from training and experience. Becoming a better shot requires a lot of practice and not settling for cheaply made gear.

The owner of Simply Rugged Holsters, Rob Leahy, sent a few items my way. I have always liked Rob's work and looked forward to evaluating these. The cowboy in me always comes out when I'm dealing with leather.

The holster I received is the DEFCON 3—a nod to the fact that this hol-

ster can be worn three different ways. I've noticed over the years that if a piece of gear claims to do a lot of different things, it usually ends up not doing anything exceptionally well. This is not the case with this holster.

The DEFCON 3 can be worn inside the waistband (IWB) or as a strong side with two different carry positions. The holster is open at the top and bottom. It is made of two pieces of leather and fitted for the specific gun being used.





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My sample was for a Commander-size 1911 pistol.

The leather is glued and then stitched with heavy nylon thread. A second piece of leather is stitched to the upper half of the holster to add support and strength to the holster. This extra leather helps keep the mouth of the holster open to a degree. The leather on the body side of the holster comes up several inches and forms a sweat guard.

If you want to wear the holster as an IWB, two leather straps are attached to the back of the holster with Chicago screws. If not worn IWB, the straps can be folded flat against the back of the holster or removed entirely. For me, removing the straps was the most comfortable.

If you wear the holster strong-side outside the waistband, integral slots are cut out of the holster's body—one on the rear and two on the front, one



**DEFCON 3 holster can be worn inside the waistband, outside strong side, or crossdraw.**

of very heavy leather at the top. To attach it to your belt, there is a 1½-inch strap with snap closure. And it's just plain classy.

I only have one complaint, and that is the snaps used to secure the pouches. I get the whole “easy on/easy off” thing, but when I put on my gear in the morning, it stays on until I take it off at night. Snaps, by their very nature, can be inadvertently unsnapped. My personal preference would be that the belt loops be sewn in place.

Like all Simply Rugged items I have ever seen or used, the quality was great, and up to everything I have come to expect from this company. ☺

*Flint Hansen has been with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office (AZ) for 12 years. He is an NRA and Arizona DPS certified Firearms Instructor. He has written numerous articles for S.W.A.T. in addition to his monthly Lawful Carry column.*

## SOURCE

### SIMPLY RUGGED HOLSTERS

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Rear of DEFCON 3 with IWB straps removed.



Dual Defender pistol magazine pouch and adjustable AR magazine pouch. Pistol mags are Chip McCormick Power 10+.

above the other. If the belt is threaded through the rear slot and the top slot on the front, the holster will have a slight forward cant. If the belt is threaded through the rear slot and the bottom slot on the front, the holster will have a straight drop.

Finally, the DEFCON 3 can be worn as a crossdraw holster.

If you have to defend yourself and expend all the ammo in the pistol, having a reload may be as important as having the gun in the first place. Additionally, the magazine is the weak link in semiautomatic firearms. I have seen magazines from numerous manufacturers fail on the range. No big deal when paper targets present no danger, but it may be a real game changer on the street.

Simply Rugged's Dual Defender magazine pouch is made from a single piece of high-quality leather. Tension on the magazines is provided by a rubber space and screw at the top of the pouch. Two belt straps on the rear of the pouch are spaced far enough apart to fit the belt loop on a pair of trousers between them. The straps secure with snaps for easy on and off.

I also had a chance to evaluate a spare mag pouch for an AR-type weapon. This pouch is also made from a single piece of leather. It is adjustable: the rear of the pouch is held together with a piece of strong leather lace, and a tensioning device is at the bottom of the pouch. The belt loop is secured to the belt with two snaps.

The last product from Simply Rugged Holsters was a dump pouch. The bag portion is made of suede leather. The pouch will stay open—unlike many nylon dump pouches—thanks to a strip



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# Desert Breakdown

**IT'S** one thing to pontificate, but quite another to be sitting in the middle of the desert practicing your own advice.

Over the past decade and a half, I've tried to share lessons on how to stay a little safer when dealing with the daily dose of the sorrow known as life. One or two of those columns covered the common exigency of suffering a disabled vehicle while traveling. But I must admit that, as a long-time police officer who has helped literally hundreds of stranded motorists, my own experiences as the stranded person were (fortunately) lacking.

My only major automotive breakdown occurred 25 years ago while returning from a whitewater paddling trip. It sounds like a country-western song, but I spent a Sunday evening in the parking lot of a rural auto parts store changing a bad alternator ... in spitting

snow ... in the dark ... with minimal tools ... and no food after spending all our remaining cash on the alternator.

Since that time, I've been an automotive fanatic, conducting all scheduled maintenance before it was due and carefully checking, re-checking and triple-checking all systems on the vehicle before every trip.

Therefore in both shock and anger, I found myself recently sitting alongside the interstate highway in the middle of the high desert east of Flagstaff, Arizona with a rear wheel that sounded like a garbage disposal full of marbles. "Uh oh," I thought, "time to execute my emergency preparedness plans for a disabled vehicle incident."

Actually, I did have such a thought, but not until after shouting several very loud and exceptionally crude words, the kind that would have made my mother cry if she had been within ear-

shot (approximately ten miles).

After analyzing the problem, it seemed apparent to my middling automotive diagnostic skills that the noise was likely a wheel bearing or some such thing that I couldn't fix with the equipment on hand.

Taking stock, I considered our resources. There were ten gallons of drinking water in sealed containers in the rear of our SUV, along with plenty of drinks and ice in the cooler. We had the necessary hats and clothing to survive the heat. We had food and, most importantly, good cellular phone reception for our two phones. If the cell phone signal had been non-existent, a Spot satellite emergency beacon was sitting in my flight bag. Personal safety wasn't a concern, as both my fiancée and I were properly armed.

Current conditions were fairly benign for the desert: shortly past noon,

## ANYTHING BUT STOCK

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the temperature was around 95 degrees and there was a fair wind blowing. All in all, it seemed like we could endure for many hours with only minor discomfort if necessary.

That was my biggest concern: the fact that we were sitting somewhere beyond East Jesus. It would take a towing company a long time to arrive once we finally located one in this wide-open, civilization-free landscape.

All in all, I was profoundly aggravated, but the simple pre-trip preparations (plenty of water, appropriate clothing, and redundant commo gear) had given us options in a potentially dangerous situation.

Therein lies the lesson of today's sermon.

After examining the situation, we decided to keep moving. I reasoned that the damage was already done, but every mile we gained toward "civilization" was a bonus.

It was a bad idea. The noise and vibration increased significantly, but we did slowly manage to limp along the shoulder to the next exit, where we had our first bit of good luck. Only two miles

away, gleaming through the shimmering heat, was a tribal casino!

Stopping in the parking lot, I beat my head against the steering wheel in spite of the fact that life would have been much worse sitting along the shoulder of the highway. As it was, we could go inside, have lunch, and even try our luck at the craps table. Of course, we'd then be broke down and dead broke, so we opted for lunch only.

Ultimately, things worked out fine. Our friend Ken Campbell, Chief Operating Officer of Gunsite, picked us up two hours later. The next morning, my better half conducted all the necessary phone negotiations to get the vehicle towed and serviced.

One final lesson on preparedness, assumptions and attention to detail awaited me: the problem turned out to be a loose wheel. In fact, the dealer said we had been literally minutes from catastrophically losing a tire.

My (used) vehicle had been recently purchased from a dealership, given a detailed personal once-over, and then taken to another independent dealer for a full pre-trip checkup. Obviously, none

of those people (self included) had bothered to check the torque of the lug nuts.

Ah, the little things....

This episode might not be as dramatic as some of the incidents from my cop-shop career, but those hours in the Arizona desert might have proven just as dangerous if not for a few simple preparations. As it transpired, the only damage was to my psyche and perhaps a few teeth marks on the steering wheel.

It also makes for a better column than when I was forced to use a rock to break the window of my other (locked) vehicle on a lonely Tennessee mountaintop as a storm was rolling in.

That reminds me of one final thing: when checking those lug nuts, make sure the hide-a-key hasn't fallen off! ☺

*Brent T. Wheat is a former SWAT officer, canine handler, detective, and patrol supervisor who retired after a 30-year law enforcement career in the Midwest. A prolific freelance writer and photographer, he is the publisher of WildIndiana Magazine, a regionally focused outdoor magazine. He can be reached at [btwheat@wildindiana.com](mailto:btwheat@wildindiana.com).*

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## Cerebral Survival

Field Survival Course has same premise as famed Jungle Survival Class taught by Randall's Adventure & Training in Peru. Now people can take the U.S. version of the class.

**"You all paid good money for this,"**

instructor Patrick Rollins said on a few occasions during the Randall's Adventure & Training Field Survival Class in Alabama. For years I've heard owners Mike Perrin and Jeff Randall say they should advertise their jungle survival class as a sleep deprivation and weight loss program. They're finally offering one stateside now!

### THE PLAN

The Field Survival Class is designed to simulate a 72-hour survival scenario, during which students learn the basic survival and navigational skills needed to self-rescue or survive until rescue arrives. They experience the hunger, sleep deprivation, exposure to the elements, and general discomfort usually associated with a survival scenario. They must also learn to work together as a group to overcome mental and physical challenges.

Each Field Survival Class is a little different and is tweaked until it's appropriate for the terrain and weather. Naturally, things evolve and new ideas are tried out, while older ones are dropped. That being said, every class starts off right, and by that I mean with a little PT (physical training).

### WHY SO MUCH PT?

I recently observed a Field Survival Class. Students were all issued an egg to take care of during the first part of the class. If the egg broke, they

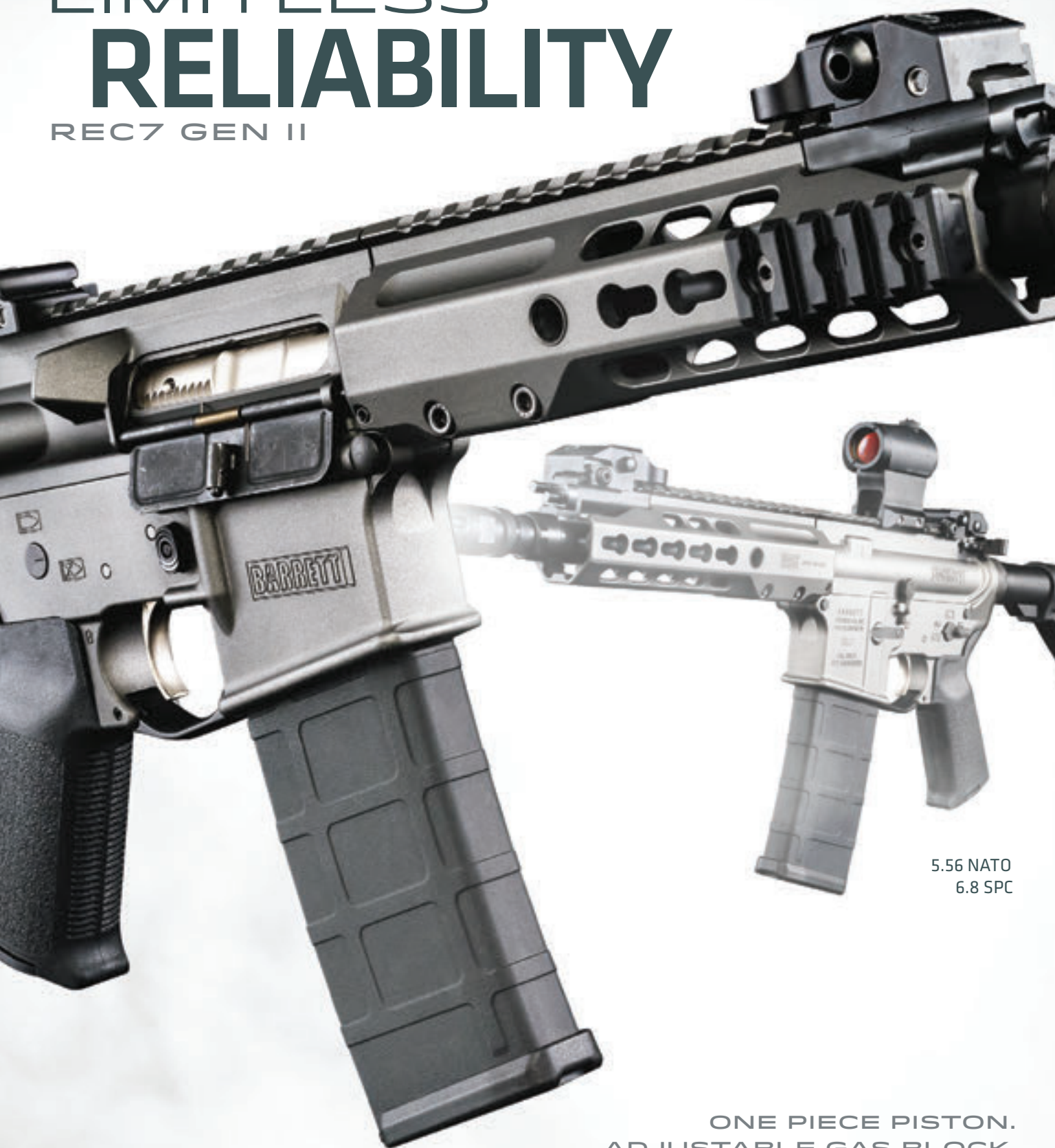


Preparing live chickens, rabbits and fish was covered in camp, as students learned how to make traps and hunting implements needed to procure provided food. They took turns and shared workload of killing, skinning, gutting, and cooking the animals.



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## RUGGED DEPENDABILITY

had to pay for it with a little more PT. At first I was skeptical, not seeing the relevance of this type of activity in a survival class. But we do not choose our times of peril!

Being prepared physically is just as important as knowing basic survival skills. A stranded vehicle, a long swim to shore, a climb up a mountain, or a long night in the bush are all very taxing on both mind and body. The entire PT section was created to help simulate this type of exhaustion.

Hydration was stressed as well as team dynamics. Collecting dew from the early morning grass is a great way to obtain water. Students had to drop and roll around, soaking up the dew.

Myriad physical activities were bestowed upon the participants until they were good and worn down. Carrying a life-size dummy (weighing about 180 pounds) around the property and through a pond was just one of the creative tasks that had to be completed before students could



**Constructing a device to move a 55-gallon water drum was just one activity that required both brains and muscle, including good teamwork and leadership qualities.**

move on to the next activity.

What better way to bring people together than a pole-carrying exercise around a field? There was also a short relay race across a leech-ridden pond that was timed for a prize. PT was either individual or group wide for some minor infraction, or sometimes it occurred if the instructor was bored and

wanted to play with the students.

There were frequent egg-checks to see who'd broken theirs, and PT was issued accordingly. After about two hours of PT, it was back to the classroom for Power-Point and navigation training, given to get a feel for map and compass before heading over to the shelter, knife and fire skills camp. Without any snack break, students had to muscle through on to the next activities.

#### **BARE-BONES SURVIVAL**

Only the very basics of knife safety and use, shelter construction and selection of materials, fire building techniques, primitive spears, and traps were taught. Anything other than that was beyond the scope of the class. Down and dirty bare-bones survival skills will get a person through just about any sit-



**Students float "injured" team member across pond. Water jugs and wooden poles were used to construct a litter to get student across safely.**

**Students had to float fire on a platform in chest-deep water. Two students walk out of deep pond into shallower waters.**







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uation, and that was the focus.

The star navigation course sent three groups around the training property, rotating leaders and pace counters so everybody got a feel for each job. In previous classes, this task had taken some groups over ten hours. When the teams were ready to go, they were given five-gallon water jugs to carry as their water source.

They had to be creative and use tools, wood from the forest, and their brains. Upon completing the star course, the teams had to carry the dummy to the top of a rappelling tower. They were then given coordinates to where they would need to set up a camp, making shelter and fire.

Classroom training and skill-building continued well into the night. I saw the sun go down and soon it was coming up. More physically punishing activities were on the way.

At about 0500, students had a new activity to help them wake up. They were given coordinates to an area in the woods that had materials to be collected on the way to a 55-gallon water drum. Out of two metal poles, rope, and a tire, they had to construct a device to transport the drum full of water back up to the classroom. This was a slow and methodical, yet tedious, process. It only worked if they acted like a team and used their most important tools—their brains!

The rest of the day was spent on more basic camp skills, map and com-



**Team Building Skills 101:** Lugging around this 20-foot-long telephone pole was just one extreme activity students had to endure in order to develop group dynamics.

pass exercises, signaling techniques, and preparing live animals for the only food given during the class.

Seemingly out of context, students were given a quick sewing lesson on making a lock-stitch. They were soon stripped of their shoes and issued some canvas, foam, cordage, and a needle. They would have to finish the class with the shoes they now had to make. As exhaustion settled in, they were given new coordinates for the camp they had to build from scratch.

Gear was stripped and the entire group was given a pack to share. At about 0200, it was time to wake the students and send them on yet another mission.

The scenario was a downed airplane in a pond. The students were survivors but had one injured member. They had to make fire and float it across with the injured member, without falling into the water. This took strong team leadership skills to accomplish.

The last big activity was building a bridge across the pond using supplied materials. Students then had to get themselves and the dummy across the bridge without it coming apart or them falling in the water. They did it! Standing in the mud comparing mosquito bites and counting leeches was what it's all about.

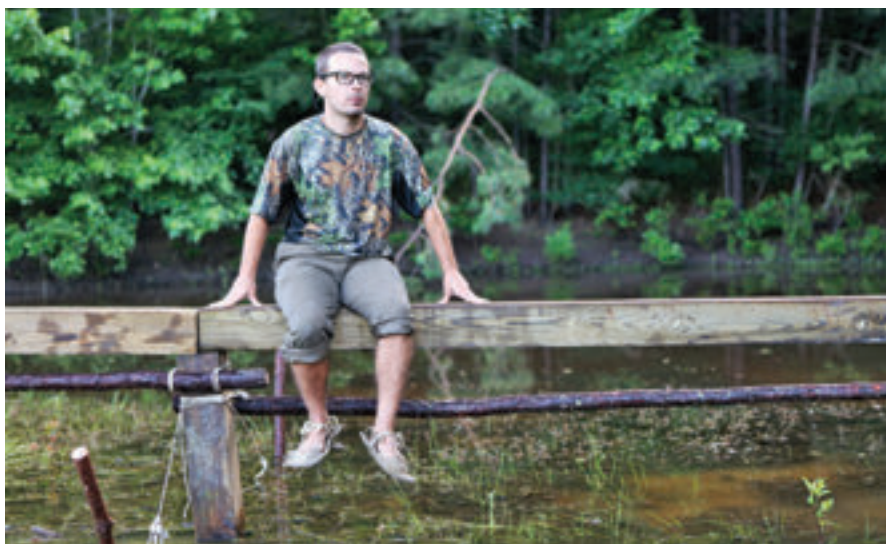
It has been said that survival is a lazy man's game, but the Field Survival class proves it's a thinking man's game. Being prepared for a survival experience is not just about skills, but also physical and mental challenges. Randall's Adventure & Training remains on the cutting edge of survival! ☺

*Reuben Bolieu is an adventurer, writer, photographer and survival instructor for Randall's Adventure & Training. He has spent most of his life hiking and backpacking through the wildernesses of the world. A lifetime student of survival, he has studied primitive survival techniques from all over the world.*

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**Final challenge was to construct, using minimal materials and tools, a bridge over a pond. Bridge had to support their own weight. Each team member went across slowly and was careful not to end up in the water. Student is wearing shoes he made by hand during class.**





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# NIGHTMARE ON SESAME STREET

## Training Gone Wrong

BY DENNY HANSEN

**B**ack in 2012, a friend emailed me to say he had been asked if I would like to attend a three-day carbine class and could he forward my contact information to the instructor. My friend admitted up front he had not attended training with this company and could not vouch for the quality of the training.

At the time I was evaluating a Mossberg AR (*ENTRY LEVEL CARBINE: Mossberg Modern Rifle*, September 2012 *S.W.A.T.*) and was hoping to get in some quality trigger time for an article. I contacted the training company and accepted the offer. I was told this would be a “high intensity” course. This was good news, as I hoped to run the Mossberg hard.

**To my surprise, we did not confirm zeros prior to starting to shoot.**

### TRAINING DAY 1

The owner of the company showed up in a Hummer covered in silk-screen graphics. This should have been my first clue as to the smoke and mirrors that were about to ensue.

Training Day (TD) 1 was supposed to

start at 0800. Waiting to see “if anyone else shows up,” we did not gear up until 1030. The class started with a safety brief. The lead instructor, let’s call him “Bert,” told the class there are four rules to follow: all guns are loaded, keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot, and watch your background.

You read that right: he either did not know or forgot Rule Two—never let the muzzle cover anything you are not willing to destroy.

That was the extent of the brief. Nothing about gear selection, stance, lube, malfunctions, staying hydrated (this was a summertime class in the Arizona desert), etc., etc.

To my surprise, we did not confirm zeros prior to starting to shoot. The first drill was to shoot two rounds standing, two rounds kneeling, and two rounds prone at 50 yards. This was a Level 1 class and, although it had some experienced shooters, nothing was said about the different kneeling and prone positions for the beginners who made up most of the class.

I didn’t expect to shoot from prone on the very first drill, so had not put on my elbow pads. No big deal since the magazine, acting as a monopod, holds most of the weight and keeps my elbows out of the gravel. Or so I thought until Bert told me to get up on my elbows under the gun



because resting the mag on the deck will cause “jams” (even though there was no toast in sight).

When Relay 1 had finished, we did not go forward to look at or tape the targets. We were dismissed and Relay 2 came and repeated the same drill. In fact, no targets were ever looked at or taped all day.

Lunch break from 1130 to 1330.

The majority of the afternoon was spent moving and shooting with empty gun/emergency reloads. Tac loads (reload with retention) were not taught. Besides the first drill in the morning, there was no positional shooting. We shot on the move from 50 to 80 yards.

When a Tempe, Arizona SWAT officer said there was no way he’d take a 50-yard shot on the move, let alone an 80-yard shot, an assistant instructor, let’s call him “Ernie,” said it’s good for “suppressive fire.”

In law enforcement or for the average citizen? Really?

Since students had not been told how to shoot on the move or even the basic fighting stance, several attempted to shoot Camp Perry style—bladed 90 degrees to the target—while moving. This resulted in several shooters on the relay being muzzled. Of course, they had not

been told about Rule 2....

If it had not been so dangerous, it would have been a real hoot to watch them shooting on the move from this stance. They were not given any corrections or advice from the instructor cadre.

Toward the end of the day and after only about 150 rounds, the guns of two students on my relay started to choke. Bert said it was likely due to bad ammo.

When my relay went off the line, I asked them if their guns were lubed. They told me they had wiped all lube from their carbines and even sprayed them with degreaser because the flyer they had received prior to class said, “dry guns work better in a dry environment.”

I pulled their BCGs and they were as dry as Arizona asphalt. Slip 2000 EWL cured the “bad ammo” problem.

Later another guy said his gun was “jamming” (still no sign of toast). He asked if I would put some of the “oil stuff” on his bolt. While the gun was definitely in need of lube, the gas key was so loose I could lift it up and down. (He told me his brother-in-law had built it and it was just as good as, well, you know.) I always throw Ned Christiansen’s MOACKS tool in my bag when attending a class.

**Although TD2 was supposed to start at 0900, we did not get close to putting rounds downrange until after 1030.**



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TD1 was supposed to run until 1700, but we shut down at 1630. Between starting late, ending early, and a two-hour lunch break, total range time of "instruction" for this "high intensity" class was only four hours. Even though it was summer in the Arizona desert, I had not built up a sweat under my armor. We were told to show up at 0900 instead of 0800 the next day.

## TRAINING DAY 2

Noticeable by their absence the next morning were the SWAT cops from Prescott, Scottsdale and Tempe, and a former student of Pat Rogers. (I only know this because he had a "Moosecock" patch on his plate carrier.)

Although TD2 was supposed to start at 0900, we did not get close to putting rounds downrange until after 1030 (again). Even then, the instructors did no prompting to get students on the line.

Upon my arrival, I expressed my concerns about TD1 to the owner, let's call him "Elmo", mainly in regard to zeroing the guns. I also told him that without taping the targets and diagnosing hits, the drills amounted to ballistic masturbation, as we were essentially just making little holes in the air that filled right back in. Students did not know if they were making good hits or completely missing the targets. Elmo talked with Bert, and the class was finally allowed to zero their guns. We zeroed at 50 yards.

The Mossberg AR I had brought had already been zeroed at the same distance, so I was good to go. But the shooter next to me had a group five inches left and four inches high (Aimpoint PRO, 1/2 MOA clicks). He asked Bert how many clicks he needed to adjust, and Bert told him go five right and four down.

I hate disagreeing with an instructor, especially in front of other students. But I was becoming more and more frustrated, so I finally opened my big mouth. I told my classmate he needed to go 20 right and 16 down and he should be close to being right on. Bert and the student both looked at me like I had just dropped my trousers and defecated on the range. After 30 minutes, making a click or two at a time and wasting a lot of ammo, the



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**I was not charged for the class. If I *had* paid, I would have demanded a refund.**

student was finally zeroed. Time was 1140.

And that's when a friend of Elmo's showed up and told him he wanted to show him his new Saiga shotgun. Leaving the class standing, Elmo and his friend went downrange to shoot it, but only after telling the class that when they came back, we would break for lunch.

I left. Needless to say, I did not show up for TD3.

I have only covered the so-called training here. I have left out pearls of wisdom from Bert during the breaks, such as, "Don't waste your money on an Aimpoint or EOTech because any \$50 sight will still put a red dot on the target."

#### VETTING

It has been said that any press is good press. And that is the reason I have not mentioned the name of the company and have changed the names of the "instructors." Elmo was hoping to get positive ink, so I was not charged for the class. If I *had* paid, I would have demanded a refund.

I have stated numerous times over the years how important it is to vet an instructor before throwing down your hard-earned cash. I share this story to illustrate that point.

In my opinion, the best way to vet an instructor is by talking to others who have taken a class from that instructor. But take into account the student's experience. For example, if he says, "That was the best training I have ever attended," and it is the *only* class he has been to, he has nothing to compare it to. Only if he has trained under at least three different instructors can his opinion be considered substantive.

The Internet is a source, but be aware that some of the kudos given to an instructor or school may not be subjective, but rather from groupies or even employees of the school.

Check around, ask questions. Caveat Emptor. ©



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## When Free Speech Is Made Criminal

**I**N July, retired U.S. Army General Wesley Clark, who sought the Democratic nomination for the 2004 Presidential election, made the startling statement in an MSNBC interview that Americans who are “disloyal to the United States” should be subjected to internment “for the duration of the conflict.”

The conflict to which he referred is the amorphously defined, and apparently interminable, “War on Terror,” so this internment is likely to last a long while.

Actually, as Clark rather churlishly pointed out on Twitter in response to his critics, he never said the word “internment.” But he did say that we should “segregate them from the normal community.” If that’s not “internment,” what is it? Are they to be herded into ghettos? And if so, and if relocation to those ghettos is mandatory, is

that not basically “internment”?

Clark also spoke—and with apparent approval—of the internment of “disloyal” Americans during World War II (many of whose “disloyalty” was defined by their Japanese ancestry). He said that “if someone supported Nazi Germany at the expense of the United States, we didn’t say that was freedom of speech, we put him in a camp, they were prisoners of war.” Sounds a lot like “internment” to me, General.

And it gets worse. Clark’s plan seems to call for the internment, oops, “segregation,” to extend not only to those who have expressed “disloyalty,” thus demonstrating that they have been “radicalized,” but also to those who are merely deemed *vulnerable* to this “radicalization.” How is *that* to be determined? And by whom?

Clark was referring to supporters of the terrorist group ISIS, as brutally evil

a bunch as has ever existed, and so, granted, it’s difficult to come up with much sympathy for what those supporters are forced to endure. The thing is, one does not *have* to be sympathetic to ISIS supporters to categorically reject a policy that calls for rounding them up and putting them in camps (or whatever Clark wants to call the facilities).

No decent person wants the twisted, toxic ideology of ISIS spewed in this country, but freedom of speech does not, *cannot* apply only to speech that the vast majority of us don’t find vilely repugnant. We may—and indeed must—shout it down, condemn it, ridicule it, and poke holes in any arguments that claim to justify it, but in a nation that calls itself the land of the free, we cannot ban it.

Today, the enemy is ISIS. Tomorrow, who knows? In 2011, Vice President Joe Biden described members of Congress

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who were aligned with the Tea Party as “like terrorists.” Their “terrorism”? Refusing to raise the limit on the national debt. Yep, fiscal responsibility is a brand of “terrorism” in the eyes of some.

The NRA, other gun rights advocacy groups, and individual gun rights advocates have frequently been branded “terrorists” and “traitors.” I personally have been accused of “treason” for suggesting to readers that they obtain information about how to fabricate and use improvised explosives, for the potential day on which freedom fighters equipped with firearms alone are not quite enough to thwart an aspiring tyrant’s plans.

If expressing support for ISIS is made a crime (and oddly, Clark admitted about ISIS supporters that, “It’s their right” to articulate that support—but wants them rounded up and “segregated” even so), then what is to stop the government from outlawing support for any other group the Administration wishes silenced?

Clark is not the first—nor the most prominent—Democratic Presidential candidate to suggest criminalizing thoughts and beliefs that are now

deemed intolerable. Speaking at a National Council for Behavioral Health conference in 2014, Hillary Clinton said the U.S. must “rein in the notion that ‘anybody can have a gun, anywhere, anytime.’ ” Must “rein in the notion.” How would a government attempt to do that? What else *can* it do but make that “notion” illegal?

About a month later, she expanded on that theme. In a town hall appearance televised on CNN, she answered a question about her desire to ban so-called “assault weapons” and “high capacity” magazines by saying, “We cannot let a minority of people, and that’s what it is—it is a minority of people—hold a viewpoint that terrorizes the majority of people.”

Whether or not it’s true that the majority of people are “terrorized” by the point of view that holds that the government has no legitimate authority to ban the very firearms most useful for defending life and liberty, so what? Viewpoints that scare people are to be made illegal? The only Constitutionally protected free speech is that which does not make the masses nervous? What, then, is the point of Constitu-

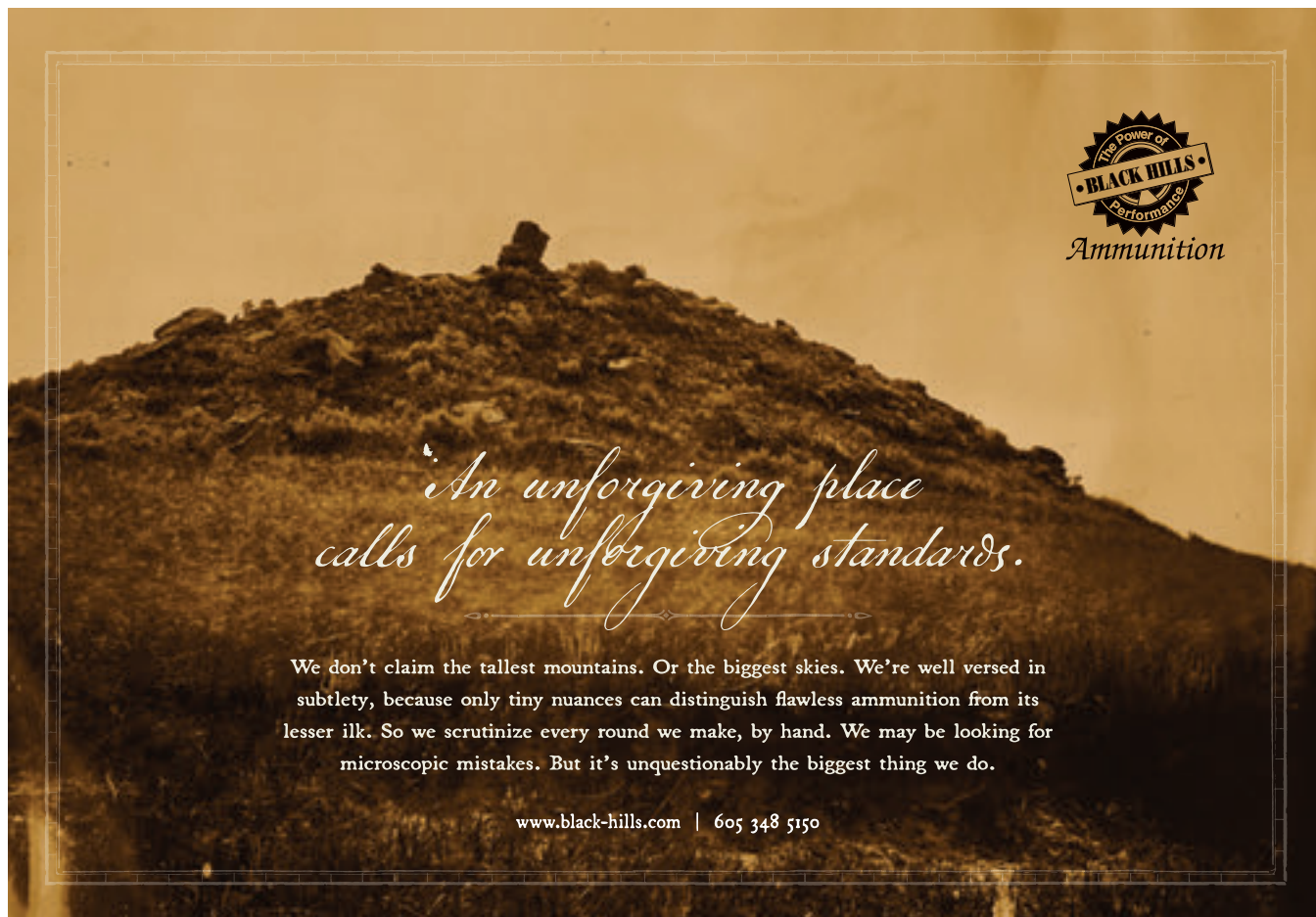
tional protection of speech if it only applies to speech that few would ever try to silence?

And so what if “it is a minority of people”? Has it become acceptable to trample the free speech rights (actually, the free *thought* rights) of minorities because the majority find those thoughts frightening? How would the “justice” system prove that someone has harbored an “illegal viewpoint”? What would the penalty be?

Clinton didn’t say, but anyone planning to vote for her might want to ask her. And actually, Clinton herself might want to reconsider her political ambitions. The powers of a U.S. President do not seem to be enough to satisfy her. She should probably try for the position of Big Sister.

These are self-described “progressive” politicians, but their supporters have either failed to notice, or are perhaps not bothered by, the fact that what they would have us “progress” toward is a society in which voicing impermissible political positions, or even *thinking* them, is a crime.

If that’s progress, call me a regressive. ☹



The advertisement features a sepia-toned photograph of a rugged mountain peak. In the upper right corner, there is a circular logo with a starburst design. The logo contains the text "THE POWER OF" at the top, "BLACK HILLS" in the center, and "Performance" at the bottom. Below the logo, the word "Ammunition" is written in a cursive font. In the center of the image, the phrase "An unforgiving place calls for unforgiving standards." is written in a large, elegant script. At the bottom, a block of text reads: "We don't claim the tallest mountains. Or the biggest skies. We're well versed in subtlety, because only tiny nuances can distinguish flawless ammunition from its lesser ilk. So we scrutinize every round we make, by hand. We may be looking for microscopic mistakes. But it's unquestionably the biggest thing we do." At the very bottom, the website "www.black-hills.com" and the phone number "605 348 5150" are listed.

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# Righteous Debriefs

**I**N “D” Platoon of the LAPD in the old days, we conducted what I would term “righteous debriefs.” I’m sure they do it today. It was a process that allowed us to learn from our mistakes and not repeat them. Every single member of an operation was given the chance to weigh in on mistakes made by himself and others during SWAT missions.

Even the newly minted “SWAT-pups” had their say. The debrief was conducted after every mission, no matter how long it took or at which hour it occurred. It was not always pretty, but it was a great process and among the finer examples of professionalism I have ever witnessed.

At times, especially after an officer-involved shooting, departments will not admit to mistakes. If any mistakes are admitted, they may be colored by rather obtuse rationale.

The reasoning for shots taken, the amount of rounds fired, who observed what and when and who did what and precisely when they did it can ultimately degrade into a befuddled mess when the truth is all but ignored. A professional (and the opposition in a court case) will see right through this and observe it for what it truly is.

In an era of instant media, this phenomenon becomes painfully obvious when a departmental spokesperson misspeaks concerning an incident. The truth soon emerges and the department is left appearing less than professional. This is especially troublesome if all parties involved are described as heroes to the media while in truth, the incident was a complete trainwreck and the officers are found to have been incompetent when all the details emerge.

I am aware of one incident that played out in the media as one thing when in fact many more rounds were fired than described or necessitated, there were cross-fire incidents and officers shooting at one another, and numerous other mistakes as well.

There is a way to avoid this. When an incident occurs, a brutally honest debrief is in order. One cannot worry about assuaging feelings and egos.

Nepotism has no place here, nor does favoritism or rank or tenure. A screw-up is a screw-up—period.

If this is done professionally, any member who fouls up needs to take responsibility for their mistakes and train not to repeat the same mistakes in future. Supervisors who cover for individuals are not professional and should not be supervisors.

Our SWAT debriefs could get beyond brutal yet hilarious at the same time. If an officer was embarrassed, he was expected to simply get over it (you were in “D” Platoon, after all), carry on and learn from his mistakes. God knows I made my share and then some.

The real benefit was that everyone knew we were all capable of making mistakes at any point in time, which had the concomitant effect of steeling one’s resolve not to screw the pooch again. We learned from our mistakes, which is why our unit was (and is) one of the finest in the world. If you do not admit to the mistake, nothing will ever be learned and you’re bound to repeat it.

Cover-ups do not work. Nor do disingenuous accolades or awards. Nothing is learned or gained from this. I am not a big fan of awarding the Medal of Valor to incompetent individuals, and yet this does occur. Some might point to the fact that to admit mistakes opens one up to future lawsuits. Newsflash, sports fans: the lawsuit is already coming, so get ahead of it and it will make it a much more defensible case.

Another less discussed and yet painfully obvious aspect is that other units around the world can pretty much figure out the truth. In your hometown, you might get away with whitewashing an incident, but it’s being discussed among units all over the world—and I mean *all* over the world, and whitewashing does not engender much respect from these other units.

I have literally stepped off a plane and been queried rather pointedly about an incident that occurred mere hours before my arrival. News travels faster and faster every day. The entire world is changing and we, whether we like it or not, must change with it. If



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this is not to your liking, I suggest floral arranging or cupcake baking as a profession.

Nothing is more refreshing than to observe a department admit to mistakes up front. It engenders respect from other professionals and the community. We all make mistakes. No one is perfect, especially in a profession replete with unpredictable and fast-moving events. I can readily defend mistakes but cannot defend dishonesty or at best disingenuous statements.

Debriefs of incidents need to be brutally honest, with no hold back. They must be constructive if anything is to be learned from them. Shortening the process has never and will never work, as the problems that exist are not admitted to and therefore can never be learned from. ☺

*Scott Reitz is a 30-year veteran of the Los Angeles Police Department and the director of the highly acclaimed International Tactical Training Seminars. Course information and schedules are available at their website at [www.internationaltactical.com](http://www.internationaltactical.com). Looking Back, a free monthly newsletter, is available by email at [itts@gte.net](mailto:itts@gte.net).*





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## Light Machine Gun for Security Details

A few months ago, I ran into a friend I hadn't seen in several years, as he had been doing contract security work in Iraq and elsewhere. He said that on some details he had used M4s, but on others AKs, depending on what he was supplied or could scrounge. He also mentioned that Kalashnikov-based weapons were easiest to acquire in most places he had been working. That is logical and has been the experience of many contractors.

What I found interesting and got me thinking, though, was that he said they had used RPK Light Machine Guns (LMGs) in a lot of their motorcades.

I've done a reasonable amount of shooting with the RPK and the RPK-74, so am familiar with the weapon. First, I asked him if they had RPKs or RPKSs, the latter the folding-stock version. They had the fixed-stock RPK, which is about 41 inches in overall length. The fixed-stock RPK-74 is actually slightly longer, about six inches longer than a fixed-stock AK-47 and 15 inches longer than a folding-stock AK with stock folded.

One of the most important missions of an automatic weapon for a security team is to provide suppressive fire during an evacuation under fire or during counter-ambush drills. This normally requires the operator to bring his weapon into action from the vehicle im-



Although it takes good upper-body strength, M249 can be fired offhand.



M249 with stock extended and bipod deployed for use.



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**With stock collapsed, M249 Para may be carried next to operator riding shotgun in a trail car or team leader in the principal's car.**



**With practice, M249 Para's stock may be quickly extended as operator exits vehicle.**

mediately upon evacuating the vehicle. The RPK with its 75-round drum magazine or 40-round magazine is likely to bang, catch, snag, trip or otherwise impede using it from within a vehicle or exiting with it in a timely manner.

One situation where the RPK would have had value was for use by a tail gunner in an SUV to light up pursuing vehicles. The other was in a support position when the motorcade was stopped and a heavier weapon would be useful for interdicting an approach. But in general, a carbine that could be more readily deployed and fired from the shoulder would be more useful.

I revisited this idea of an LMG for security details more recently when a contact in South America emailed me about wanting to up-gun the team he was on protecting the owner of various mines and factories. Some of the mines were in fairly remote locations and there was danger from insurgents as well as labor unrest.

He planned to get either a couple of M249 LMGs and/or M60 GPMGs. He also was attempting to negotiate for me to come do a training course, but we were quite a ways apart on money.

Still, I did give some thought to how well the M249 might perform with a security team. I was surprised to discover



**Although capability exists to use STANAG magazines with the M249, it is not a desirable option.**

when I did some experimenting that it could be used, though it would have many limitations. First, I think a security team would want the Para model of the M249. The standard M249 is 40.75 inches overall and 22 pounds loaded. Due to its shorter barrel and sliding aluminum buttstock, the Para model is only 35 inches overall and about 20 pounds loaded. It is still too heavy and bulky to deploy inside a vehicle except as a tail gun, but it can be stowed next to the front-seat operator for rapid deployment when debussing.

The M249 is fed from M27 linked belts, either held in a hard plastic or soft canvas box

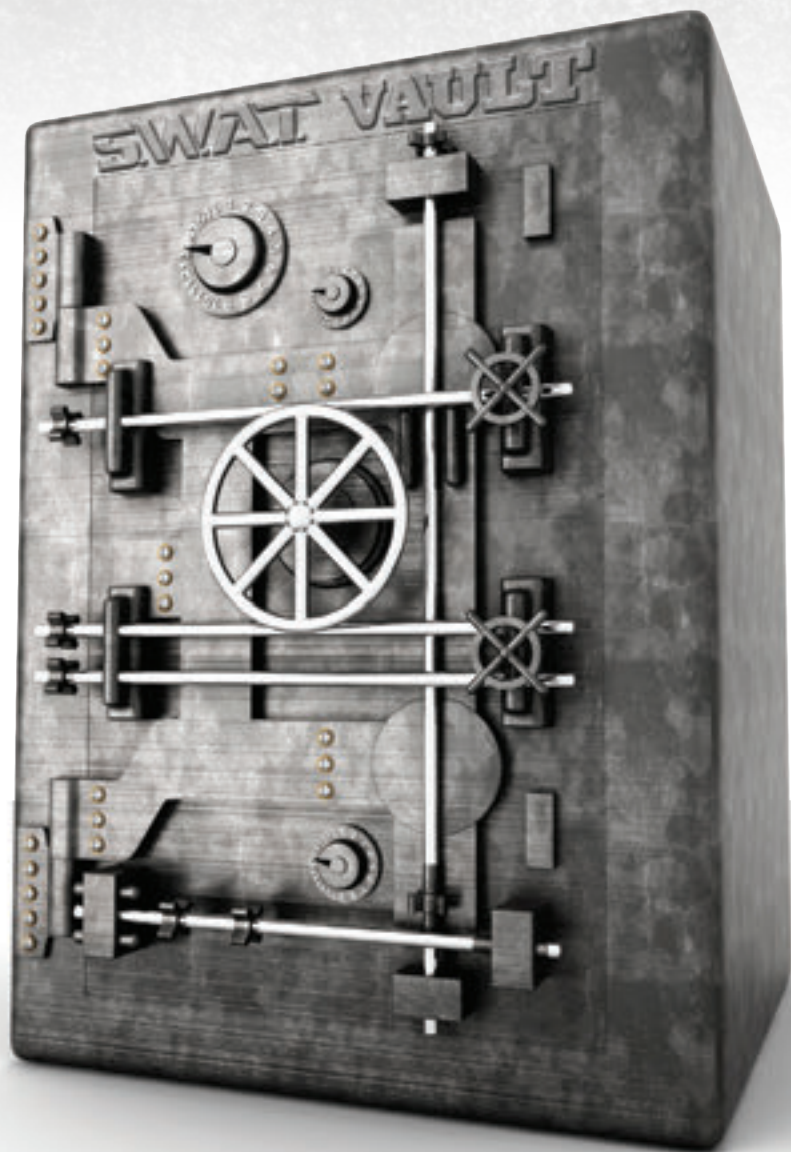
attached below the weapon and holding 200 rounds. Some readers may be aware that the M249 can also be fed from a STANAG (M16) magazine. On the surface, this would seem to be an advantage for a security team armed with M4s. My feeling is: not so much!

STANAG magazines do not always feed the M249 reliably. Not only that, but taking magazines away from other members of the security team to quickly run them through the M249 would not normally be tactically sound, as they will be selecting targets and engaging them with a couple of rounds, thus better conserving ammo.



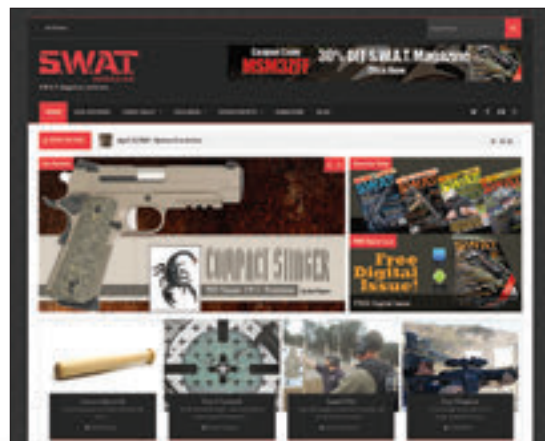
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Barrels may be changed on the M249 if a spare head-spaced to the LMG is available, but that is not really a major consideration for a security team unless entrenched and facing a serious attack. The folding bipod of the M249 is an advantage if engaging attackers from a position in support of other members of the team or covering an evacuation under fire.

The M249's stock may be deployed relatively quickly, allowing the operator to engage with the weapon shortly after leaving a vehicle. With training, the M249 may be shoulder fired, but it takes an operator with good upper-body strength. Members of security teams are generally in pretty good physical condition, so that might work, but if possible, it would be more effective to go prone using the bipod or brace the bipod on a wall or other surface for better engagement.

The M249's sights are fairly usable, and the weapon is accurate in controlled bursts. If the tactical situation indicated the need for the M249's firepower and there were time to get it deployed, it could turn an ambush or cover an evacuation.

I would still have problems with the M249's lack of portability compared to a rifle. M4 carbines in the hands of members of the security team would allow faster reaction and could still throw out a lot of bullets to break an ambush or cover an evacuation under fire.

Even better, one or more members of the security team could be armed with .308 semi- or full-auto AR-type rifles with an ACOG or other optical sight. These would serve as more powerful weapons to break an ambush and could also fill the short- to medium-range counter-sniper role.

I have to conclude that a light machine gun, such as the M249, could be a valuable asset to a security team facing a serious threat. But a cost/benefit analysis would seem to show that in most circumstances it does not offer that great an advantage for a security team. ☹

*Leroy Thompson has trained hostage rescue, close protection, counterinsurgency, and anti-terrorist units in various parts of the world. Prior to Operation Desert Shield, he trained U.S. Army protective teams and hostage rescue units. He is the author of over 50 books on weapons and tactics and between 2,500 and 3,000 magazine articles.*





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**Ruger SR-556TD**

BY DENNY HANSEN

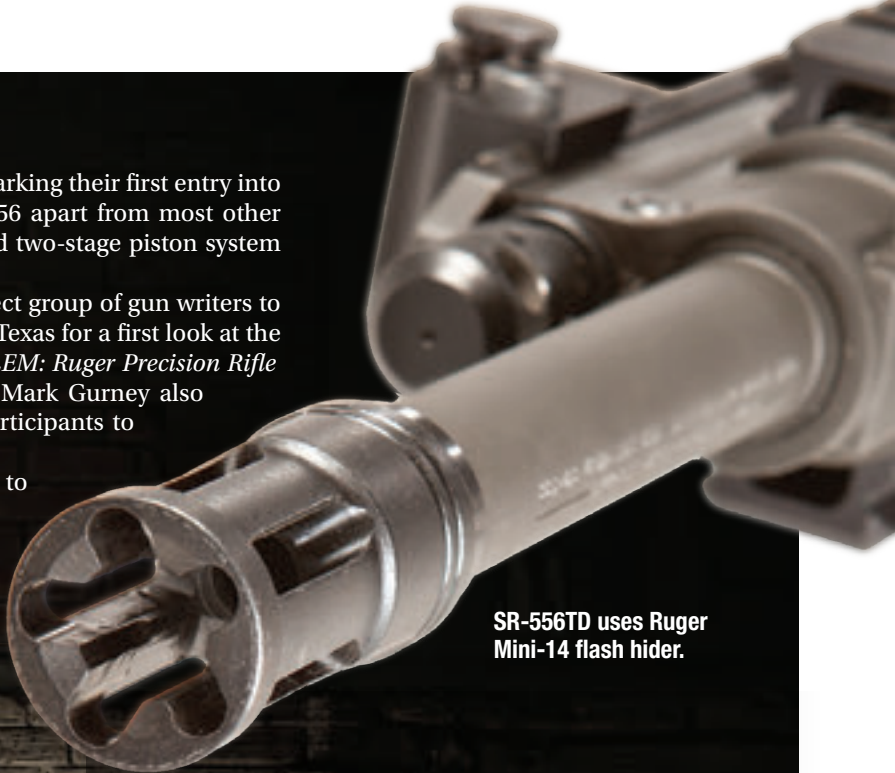
PHOTOS BY STRAIGHT 8 PHOTOGRAPHY



**I**N 2009, Ruger introduced the SR-556, marking their first entry into the AR-15 market. What set the SR-556 apart from most other rifles was that it used a chrome-plated two-stage piston system with a multi-stage gas regulator.


In March 2015, Ruger invited a select group of gun writers to attend a conference at FTW Ranch in Texas for a first look at the Ruger Precision Rifle (*LONG RANGE? NO PROBLEM: Ruger Precision Rifle at FTW Ranch*, October 2015 *S.W.A.T.*). Ruger's Mark Gurney also brought along the SR-556 Takedown (TD) for participants to shoot before its official introduction to the public.

While the TD has its merits, Gurney explained to us that Ruger had considered entering it in Army trials, which required a quick-change barrel. We fired the TD in both 5.56 and .300 Blackout with and without suppressors.



SR-556TD uses Ruger Mini-14 flash hider.

#### TAKEDOWN



Like its predecessor, the TD uses Ruger's patented chrome-plated two-stage piston with four-position gas regulator. The two-stage piston results in a cleaner, cooler-running firearm and delivers a smooth delivery stroke to the bolt carrier. The default position for the gas regulator is "2."

The barrel is hammer forged, chrome-lined with a length of 16.1 inches and chamber optimized for both .223 Remington and 5.56x45mm NATO. The carbine comes with a Ruger Mini-14 type flash hider, but other muzzle devices, including suppressors, may be used.

The bolt is chrome-plated and the chrome-plated one-piece bolt carrier has an oversized and radiused rear bearing surface to reduce "bolt bounce."

The trigger installed and shipped with the TD is Ruger's Elite 452™. This two-stage trigger is both smoother and lighter than the triggers found on most ARs. It uses a lightweight hammer that increases lock time by about 30%, and a full-power hammer spring to ensure ignition. Ruger literature states that the 452 trigger has a 4.5-pound pull, but using an RCBS trigger pull gauge, mine broke cleanly and crisply at 3.75 pounds.

The TD ships with flip-up iron sights. The front is fully adjustable for both elevation and windage, while the rear sight is adjustable for windage.

The carbine is heavier than many other AR-type rifles. This is attributable to the TD being piston operated as well as the full-length Picatinny top rail and the rails at three, six and nine o'clock.

The top rail is marked T-2 to T-36, while the side and bottom rails are marked (L, R and B) 16-40. These "T" markings provide handy reference when reinstall-

# TACTICAL TAKEDOWN!



Laser-engraved Ruger logo on chrome-plated one-piece bolt carrier.



ing optics and other items when the rifle is broken down for transport. On my personal rifles, I mark the optic mount and receiver with a fine-line paint pen. This usually results in a return to zero, or close enough that one or two rounds will re-establish zero.

The TD uses a six-position Magpul MOE SL stock (on a milspec receiver extension) and Magpul MOE pistol grip. The carbine ships with three 30-round Magpul PMAGs.

The TD comes in a nylon case very similar to the case that comes with the Ruger 10-22 Takedown. The main compartment features a full-length zipper that allows complete access to the interior, which has individual pockets for the lower, upper and barrel. Two zippered pockets on the outside of the case are large enough to hold magazines, a small optic, and ammo. The lower pocket has PALS webbing to attach ancillary pockets.

## BARREL INSTALLATION

The upper and lower receivers are assembled in the normal fashion used by all AR-type rifles. To install the barrel, the first step is to lock the bolt to the rear. If you overlook this basic step, you'll be rewarded with a large amount of frustration.

.300 AAC Blackout barrel and magazines are available options from Ruger.







Left side of fully assembled rifle belies its unique qualities.

Next (as viewed from the rear) cant the barrel slightly to the left, or about 11 o'clock. While pushing the barrel in, rotate it to 12 o'clock. You will feel and hear the barrel lock into position.

To remove the barrel, again lock the bolt to the rear. Pull back on what Ruger calls slider pads located on each side of the six o'clock rail. While holding the slider pads to the rear, rotate the barrel to 11 o'clock and pull the barrel forward from the upper receiver.

Sound simple? If you follow the steps, it is.

An available option from Ruger is a .300 AAC Blackout barrel and two GI-type aluminum magazines. The barrel and magazines shipped with the .300 AAC barrel are clearly marked to ensure the wrong ammunition is not chambered.

#### ADDITIONS

To keep the weight and size down, I opted to use an EOTech XPS3 holographic weapon sight. At only 3.8 inches long, it allows plenty of room for magnifiers, night vision, lasers, etc if you require such items.

The XPS3 has 20 daylight settings and ten settings for Gen I through III+ night vision devices. It uses a single 123 battery

EOTech XPS3 holographic weapon sight was utilized in the evaluation.

Four-position gas regulator and slider bar used to remove barrel. Front sight (in folded position) is adjustable for both windage and elevation.



Standard model ships with three 30-round PMAGs. Magazines and barrel shipped with .300 AAC barrel are clearly marked to ensure wrong ammunition is not chambered.



Rear iron sight is adjustable for windage.



and will run 600 continuous hours at setting 12.

I attached a Troy Industries QD push button on the left rail and added a Blue Force Gear Vickers Combat Application sling.

#### INITIAL EVALUATION

Although the three PMAGs that come with the rifle should suffice for most users, I wanted to make sure the TD would work with a wide assortment of readily available magazines.

I used magazines from C Products Defense, Fusil, Bravo Company (D&H Industries), Lancer (20- and 30-round), Magpul (20- and 30-round), Tango-Down, SureFire, and reconditioned USGI (new springs, anti-tilt followers).

In a similar vein, all brands of ammunition are not available in all areas, so I tested 26 commercial loads and one handload.

To establish a baseline on velocities, I began by firing ten-round strings using my PACT Inc. Professional chronograph. The carbine was zeroed and fired for accuracy from 50 yards. Two five-round groups of each load were fired to average the accuracy of each.

» Continued on page 88



All rail positions are marked for ease of replacing accessories.

## » SPECIFICATIONS

### RUGER SR-556 TAKEDOWN

MANUFACTURER	Sturm, Ruger & Co., Inc.
MODEL	SR-556 Takedown
TYPE	Semiautomatic, piston operated
CALIBER	5.56mm NATO/.223 Remington
CAPACITY	30
BARREL	16.1 inches, 1:9 twist
BOLT GROUP	Chrome-plated one-piece bolt carrier and bolt
MUZZLE DEVICE	Ruger Mini-14-type flash hider, ½"x28 threads
LENGTH OF PULL	11.1 to 14.4 inches
OVERALL LENGTH	32.75 to 36 inches
WIDTH	2.5 inches
HEIGHT	7.75 inches
WEIGHT	7.6 pounds
STOCK	Six-position collapsible Magpul MOE SL, milspec receiver extension
PISTOL GRIP	Magpul MOE
FINISH	Manganese Phosphate/Hardcoat Anodized
SUGGESTED RETAIL	\$2,049.00



SR-556TD comes with three rail covers. More manufacturers should do this, as they save the hand and protect the rails from damage.

## » AMMUNITION PERFORMANCE

BRAND	LOAD	AVERAGE VELOCITY (feet-per-second)
Aguila*	62-gr. HMJBT	2,980.0
American Eagle	55-gr. FMJ	3,009.9
ASYM	77-gr. BTHP Match	2,282.2
Australian Outback	55-gr. Sierra BlitzKing	2,961.5
Australian Outback	69-gr. Sierra BlitzKing Match	2,688.1
Black Hills*	50-gr. Barnes TSX	3,309.2
Black Hills	55-gr. FMJ	3,085.7
Black Hills	60-gr. V-Max	2,862.1
Black Hills	68-gr. BTHP Match	2,667.2
Black Hills	75-gr. Match	2,605.2
Black Hills*	77-gr. Tipped Match King	2,767.7
Black Hills*	77-gr. Mk262	2,740.7
Double Tap	55-gr. Barnes TSX	3,006.8
Double Tap	55-gr. Nosler Ballistic Tip	3,050.1
Federal	55-gr. Nosler Ballistic Tip	2,924.2
Hornady	55-gr. FMJ	2,937.0
Hornady*	55-gr. GMX	3,182.9
Hornady	55-gr. TAP FPD	3,006.4
Hornady	60-gr. Barrier	2,918.9
Hornady	60-gr. TAP Urban	3,124.0
Hornady*	62-gr. TAP FPD	3,038.6
Hornady	68-gr. BTHP	2,775.2
Hornady*	75-gr. BTHP Match	2,893.4
Hornady	75-gr. TAP FPD	2,617.9
HPR	75-gr. BTHP	2,710.8
Summit*	55-gr. Match	2,943.9
Summit*	77-gr. Match	2,649.9
Handload	60-gr. Swaged OT	2,723.4

\*Denotes 5.56x45mm load

Velocity obtained with PACT Professional chronograph, ten-round strings with first screen ten feet from muzzle. Elevation 4,843 feet, 88 degrees, 77% humidity.

## WIN THIS!

The AR-15/M16/M4 platform is undoubtedly the most modular rifle in history. Aftermarket parts run the gamut from firing pins to front sights. The platform is available in a wide range of calibers, but normally an entire upper receiver assembly is necessary to accomplish a caliber change. If you asked Santa for one rifle capable of firing two different cartridges, this Sweepstakes is for you.

# MGI HYDRA



## MGI HYDRA

One lucky winner will receive a 5.56 Hydra® Rifle and .300 Blackout Barrel assembly. The Hydra rifle is the industry leader in multi-caliber design. The QCB (Quick Change Barrel) is the easiest and quickest way to change barrels. Designed with a unique cam system, the barrels can be changed within seconds without the use of any tools. Simply lift the retaining block, swing the cam arms down, and lift the barrel out. Drop in the .300 Blackout barrel and lock in place. You have just converted a 5.56mm into a .300 Blackout. The rifle and extra barrel assembly come in a fitted 36-inch hard case suitable for tactical operations or hunting.

The 16-inch 5.56 barrel has an M4 profile with A2 flash suppressor, A2 front sight base, and 1:9 twist. The .300 Blackout barrel is also 16 inches long but has a heavy profile with a 1:10 twist and low profile-gas block. The barrels are made from 4140 chrome moly steel with M4 feed ramps. The lower receiver features a six-position stock and A2 pistol grip.

## EOTECH HWS

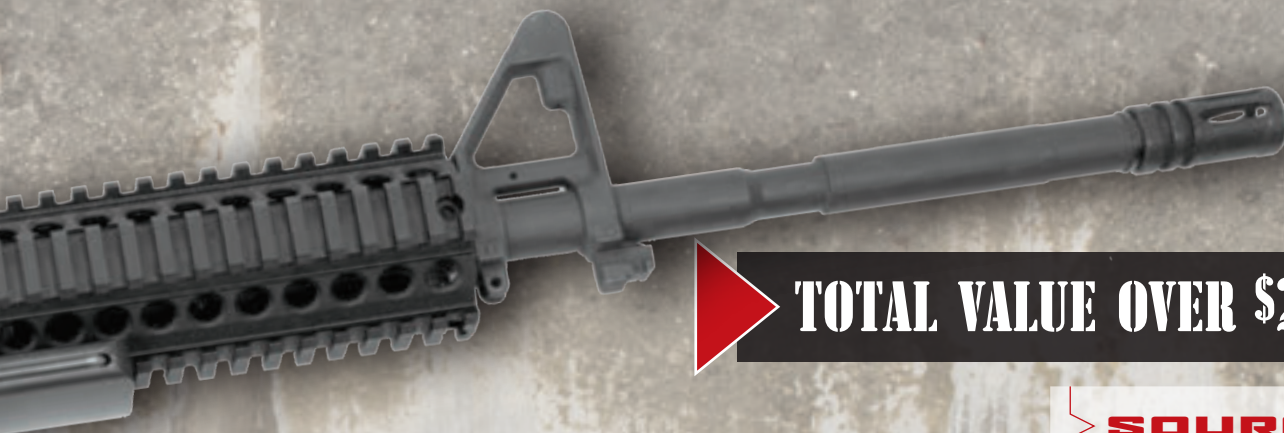
For serious practitioners, iron sights on self-defense carbines are going the way of the dodo bird and being replaced by red dot sights. The EOTech Model 512 Holographic Weapon Sight is the most popular holographic optic on the market. Ideal for speed and versatility, the Model 512 runs on easy-to-find AA batteries and attaches to any one-inch Weaver or MIL-STD 1913 rail. The sight measures 5.6x2x2.5 inches and weighs in at 11 ounces.





## CARRYING THE LOAD

Rifles are carried more than they are shot, so the winner will receive a patent pending Padded Vickers Sling from Blue Force Gear. This tactical sling combines the capability of the Vickers Sling with the added comfort of a padded rear section. The two-inch inline pad doesn't move up or down the sling and is made from closed-cell foam, which won't separate or gain water weight. The front section, with the Quick Adjuster, allows the user to instantly lengthen or shorten the sling, quickly transitioning from hands-free carry to a shooting position with a simple pull of the Adjuster.



**TOTAL VALUE OVER \$2,900!**

## HORNADY AMMUNITION

You'll want to feed the Hydra with premium ammunition, so we have included Hornady ammunition in both calibers, 400 rounds in total. For the 5.56 barrel, that means 200 rounds of the superb 55-grain Hornady TAP FPD. Ensuring your family's safety and security requires dependable ammunition. Hornady's TAP FPD is superior tactical ammunition designed specifically for protection from deadly threats. TAP FPD is engineered to deliver reliable and consistent performance every time.



The .300 Blackout (Whisper) is a highly efficient cartridge based on the .221 Remington case necked up to .308. Renowned as a subsonic cartridge for use with suppressed guns, the .300 Blackout (Whisper) from Hornady is available in both supersonic and subsonic loads.



This Sweepstakes brings you 100 rounds of each: subsonic 208-grain A-MAX and 110-grain V-MAX. These Hornady loads are reliable performers with or without a suppressor and bring a new level of flexibility to the AR-15 platform.

## SOURCES

### MG INDUSTRIES, INC.

(207) 817-3280  
www.mgi-military.com

### BLUE FORCE GEAR, INC.

(877) 430-2583  
www.blueforcegear.com

### EOTECH, INC.

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# CUSTOM COLLABORATION

Bravo Company Mfg. and Wilson Combat teamed up to bring the limited-edition BCM Gunfighter 1911—a hand-built interpretation of a professional-grade .45. Copperhead not included.

## BCM Gunfighter 1911

BY ETHAN JOHNS



## When two companies with the reputations of Bravo Company and Wilson Combat announce they are going to collaborate on a limited edition, it's worth paying attention.

The BCM Gunfighter 1911 is a steel hand-fitted full-size Government model with a light rail and a laundry list of special features that set it apart. It is flashy in its almost conspicuously subdued blackness, with a matte black Armor Tuff finish and black Micarta grip panels. This is a nod to its hard use intention, fit for duty anywhere a full-size .45 is appropriate, while downplaying its full-house Wilson Combat custom provenance.

### FEATURES

The Gunfighter's blackness may be the first thing that grabs the eye, but the blend of features is right behind. Wilson's proprietary X-TAC checkering is used on the slide, front strap, and mainspring housing, setting the pistol off with a unique edge.

The sights are a tritium front paired with a plain serrated Battlesight rear that has a U notch, plenty of light through the notch, and no distractions. The Gunfighter is available with single or ambi-

dextrous thumb safeties per the customer's preference, and Number 5 tested here wears a single sided.

The magazine release is ever so slightly extended, allowing many to drop the mag without the habitual grip shift of many 1911s but with no risk of an inadvertent "oopsie" magazine release. All parts are Wilson Bullet Proof, which many 'smiths consider the standard for durable machined steel upgrades on lesser pistols.

The solid trigger breaks like you dream about, at three pounds and change. There is just enough pre-travel to let a gloved finger know it is at the wall and then a release that leaves the shooter with every opportunity for success—it is "pass it around to the buddies 'feel that!'" good.

The recoil system is traditional without any goofy guide rods, and the front end locks via the bushing system. The bushing was a precise fit that was impressive on its own with absolutely



Gunfighter is a worthy descendant of this World War I Colt.

## The recoil cycle benefited from the effortless gliding of the action, while the other features kept the 1911 anchored in hand.

zero play, but still able to be removed or installed by hand.

For me, the standout feature in handling the BCM Gunfighter is the silky smoothness with which it locks and unlocks. The Browning link system can very typically have two slight to pronounced “bumps” by hand or recoil as it cycles: one as recoil causes the slide to “knock” the locking lugs on the barrel backwards and down, and another as the recoil spring drives the feeding and chambering as the lugs “clunk” back into lock up.

The unlocking and locking are almost imperceptible in Number 5. It feels like a fixed barrel that isn’t moving. The slide glides back and forth on the rails with no friction and zero play.

### DISASSEMBLY

What surprised me was, when the pistol was apart for inspection and lubrication, the fit was actually tight—tipping the slide on the frame without the barrel did nothing. One might expect from the silky travel that the two would mate together and smoothly race just with gravity, but the tolerances are impressive.

Disassembled, the shooter can see just how tightly the pistol is fitted, but together and ready

for work, the pistol transforms into a testament to proper hand fitting, with uncanny smoothness. I’ve been issued a good number of hand-fitted national match and duty 1911s, even getting “pick of the litter” in the armory on several occasions. I’ve also had the good fortune to shoot a healthy number of custom 1911s from other units and makers.

### SMOOTH OPERATOR

When I say that Number 5 is *smooth*, it comes with plenty of legitimate comparisons to bounce it against. Over 30 hours of handwork goes into each build. It’s worth rewinding and visualizing that. There’s a reason a true custom 1911 feels different, and then there’s an additional difference between handwork by a routine smith and a shop like Wilson that is at the top of their game.

That smoothness was the hallmark of every shooting session with the Gunfighter. The recoil cycle benefited from the effortless gliding of the action, while the other features kept the 1911 anchored in hand. The Gunfighter shoots just a touch softer than you might expect with hardball or +P JHPs, subjective in feel, but substantiated on the timer.

Shooting it with Winchester 3-Gun 230-grain



Mud tire appearance of X-TAC checkering is appropriate, as it adds serious traction with no discomfort.





**BCM star motif under Wilson BattleSight and on G10 grips sets off a sharp, serious pistol.**



**Wilson Combat Bullet Proof X-TAC mag well added to feel of the pistol and boosted reloads, as did gently extended mag release.**

flat points or Wilson Combat match 200-grain lead semiwadcutters causes the shooter to forget he is still launching major power factor .45 goodness downrange. When a light is mounted to the rail, this effect is accentuated, the additional weight helping tame recoil further.

#### **ACCURACY**

Wilson Combat builds the Gunfighter with a one-inch guarantee at 25 yards. That is a tall order that speaks to the confidence they have in the gun. However, Number 5 delivered with Wilson's 200-grain HAP JHP load. I put down a couple of groups that were right at the one-inch mark from the bench, with four of the best group's holes in .88 inch.

Another standout load was Hornady's 220-grain Training flat points, with boringly consistent 1.25- to 1.6-inch groups from bench, barricade and slow fire. A roundup of 11 loads clustered their groups right on top of the front sight at an average of 1.53 inches.

I noted an unusual consistency in point of impact among makers, bullet weights, and loads. Across the loads, there was very little shift in point of impact at 25 yards. This is unusual in my hands, with many of the pistols I've worked with lately having the expected shift between grain weights, and some guns having a few inches shift with different types or makers of the same weight.

The BCM .45 was noteworthy and so consistent in this regard that at this point I would almost expect any in-spec load to cut the same hole.

All good, but accuracy at the bench is at the kiddie table compared to what the pistol lets you

hit on demand. The Gunfighter earned its keep on all drills. Probably not a surprise at this point in the story.

#### **RANGE DRILLS**

The best example is the Ten-Shot Assault (*TEN-SHOT QUAL COURSE: Budget Shooting Performance Test*, January 2014 S.W.A.T.), with multiple shots on the clock at 25, 15, and 7 yards, finishing on the move. The drill can be run for bests with respect to time or score as long as the shooter doesn't exceed 20 seconds or too few points. I ran for score, which for me often results in a slow time with no more points than when I hoof it.

But Number 5 posted consecutive runs of 98 and 99 with the Winchester 3-Gun loads in 19 and 18 seconds respectively. A 100 would certainly be better, but 99 is a personal best at the moment.

Running strings of five shots from the ready in five seconds at ten yards on a B8 target yielded easy 100s, with most in the X and time to spare. The 1911 gobbled up steel plates as fast as I could put the front sight on them, besting my usual 1911 times on the plate rack. This is one of those handguns that allows you to deliver exactly what you are capable of with no excuses.

#### **CHECKERING, SLIDE RELEASE AND MAG WELL**

The X-TAC checkering and BCM grips worked extremely well. The pistol was locked in place as good as with any other traction approach I've used and better than most. What was particularly good about each was that the traction doesn't commit the shooter to that location, allowing the hand to

stick with pressure or adjust easily when desired. Equally appreciated was that the X-TAC didn't abrade, poke or otherwise end up causing pain by the end of a long training session and shouldn't require gloves or the shooter to "earn" calluses.

The X-TAC has a distinctive "mud tire" look that either seems cool or is off-putting depending on taste, but it works—and works extremely well. It is matched on the slide's grasping grooves and there for me it worked, but was perhaps not much more effective than the traditional vertical serrations going back to the original M1911.

Two component pieces that also add to the overall pistol are the Bullet Proof slide release

and X-TAC integrated magazine well/mainspring housing.

The slide release has a different shape than much of what is on the market, subtle but effective. The original Colt part had a pronounced concave curve and sharp checkering and was very effective. Over the years it seems that the part has slowly morphed on many guns into a lightly grooved, sloped part that is hard to get purchase on at speed to release the slide. This is accentuated with gloves or sweaty, smaller or weaker hands. The Wilson release addresses this by removing the slope and providing the shooter a perpendicular ledge that doesn't extend any farther, but works like a champ.

The Bullet Proof mag well is masterfully blended and gives a very generous opening to get the single-stack magazines in. Reloading is comparatively much more important to 1911 shooters than their 18+ shot 9mm armed brethren. Between the mag well and slide release, the Gunfighter makes that substantially easier and more certain.

#### RELIABILITY

The current market saturation of 1911s of every type and price has probably skewed perceptions of what is reliable and possible in the design. In the gun's first 900 rounds, the Gunfighter had one hiccup with quality magazines. This was a failure

**Hallmark feature of Gunfighter 1911 is its smooth cycling, a testament to over 30 hours of hand fitting.**



**BCM 1911's exceptional trigger, bold Battlesights, and handling qualities translated to the target as in this 99 on the Ten-Shot Assault, and possibilities for two strings of five shots in five seconds at ten yards.**





Gunfighter 1911 delivered on its one-inch guarantee with Wilson Combat 200-grain HAP bullets with groups such as this.

to go completely into battery with a MagTech 230-grain jacketed semiwad-cutter target load. This resolved quickly at “Tap” of the immediate action cycle.

A pretty small outlier: target loads in the traditional 185- and 200-grain weights cycled like a champ, as did 150 other rounds of the MagTech and all duty load profiles.

With two highly reputable companies standing behind a signature gun that bears both logos, the shooter is the winner, getting a unique blend of features that work extremely well and are not available from Wilson Combat as a standard item.

A custom hand-fitted 1911 is an anomaly in a largely disposable oriented society. Cycling the Gunfighter, it is immediately apparent that it is different.

The more you’ve handled 1911s, the more obvious that feeling equals days’ worth of hours in talented hands to make it right. The price reflects this and will be the elephant in the room for some. Each individual has a scale of worth and value that is unique to them.

The Gunfighter isn’t meant to compete with the average pistol. It is better viewed as a concept of what is *possible* in a combat .45 when the time is taken to make it as smooth, reliable, and accurate as it can be all at the same time. This will have a powerful appeal to some.

I hope the best names in our industry continue to collaborate like this. ☺

## SOURCES

**BRAVO COMPANY MFG.**  
(877) 272-8626  
[www.bravocompanymfg.com](http://www.bravocompanymfg.com)

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# GOOD GUYS WEAR MASKS

**IT** is often said you should train as much as possible with your equipment so when the time comes to use it for real, everything is second nature. One aspect of officer training that is often overlooked is shooting with a gas mask on.

Most law enforcement officers only train with a gas mask when it is mandated, and that may only happen once a year—if at all. Private citizens who own masks may never train with one. But if you ever have to wear a mask when your life is on the line, you'd better have practiced with one first.

Soon after 9-11, there was a big rush to equip all officers in our area with gas masks and chemical suits in the event of a terrorist attack. We'd previously had masks available to us, but they were not individually issued. They were used primarily for crowd control, with the only threat being CS or CN gas. But with the specter of a chemical or biological attack, we were issued individual masks that actually fit properly.

Unfortunately, after the big push to get the masks issued and some initial training, the masks found their way into patrol bags and lockers and were soon forgotten about. I am sure this occurred in other agencies as well. This needs to change. It is time to get the masks out and make them a part of your on-going training regime.

## MASK SELECTION

All types of gas masks are available for law enforcement and civilian use. If you have a say in what mask you or your department will use, consider the following. Besides being an effective mask to stop chemical and biological agents, your ability to see out of the mask is very important.

Some older masks, such as the military's M17 mask, had two eyelets that did not provide the user with a great deal of vision. Newer masks from MSA and AVON have a single face shield that increases your field of vision considerably.

No matter what mask you have, your peripheral vision will be affected, in some cases as much as 25%. This is a concern for operating in high-risk environments, since you must maintain good situational awareness by being able to see what is going on around you. Limited vision forces the wearer to move his head much farther left and right than he is used to.

Besides affecting your vision left and right, your ability to look down is also limited. This will become evident when you attempt to locate gear on your belt or vest and have not practiced without looking. You

## Operating with a Gas Mask

BY RICHARD MEURE





**Take the time now to train with your mask so you master the skills required to operate effectively.**



Two types of gas masks: M17 (left) and MSA.





**Above: Size and weight difference between a Chem Bio Filter (left) and a standard chemical agent is substantial. Practice with the filter you will be using.**

**Left: Shooting fundamentals do not change when wearing a protective mask and firing a handgun.**



will not be able to see where your equipment, such as magazines, handcuffs and radio, are.

Another aspect of mask selection is the ability to adjust the location of the filters. Can you decide whether the filter is on the left or right side of the mask? Does the mask require two filters, or is there only a single one in the center? Are you using a mask with a PAPR (Powered Air Purifying Respirator) or operating with an SCBA (Self Contained Breathing Apparatus)?

Both these systems require some sort of tubing leading to the mask. If you cannot change the location of the filters to meet your shooting style, you will have a hard time getting even a semi-quality sight picture, especially when using a long gun.

#### **OPERATING WITH THE MASK**

Once you have your mask selected, you need to train with it. This includes how to don and doff the mask and ensure you have a proper seal. Make sure you are "fit tested" with the mask you are issued. If you have the wrong size mask, you will not obtain or be able to maintain a good seal. That could let "the bad stuff" in.

As a member since 2002 of a Regional Terrorism Response Team that trains exclusively in gas masks, I have experienced all the discomfort a mask can produce. They can become un-





**Above:** Shooting a long gun requires canting it. Knowing your mechanical offset will allow you to place rounds on target.

**Left:** Operators must be familiar with their equipment because they are not able to look down to locate items on their vests or belts.

comfortable and cause headaches and profuse sweating.

I have seen officers become so frustrated and uncomfortable wearing a mask they will suddenly rip it off to get some relief. Others will just break the seal and try to let in some fresh air during the exercise. This simply cannot happen in a toxic environment, no matter how uncomfortable the mask becomes.

It takes time to get used to operating with a mask on. Your breathing patterns will be affected and you will have to learn how to control your breathing, especially if you are exerting yourself.

As practice for this essential skill, try wearing the mask while going through an obstacle course and see how well you do. How long can you keep the mask on before it fogs up or you start having trouble breathing?

By doing this in training, you can establish a baseline of how long you will be able to effectively operate in the mask. This is especially important if you are operating with an SCBA and have a limited amount of oxygen to use. A 60-minute bottle of air could be gone in 30 minutes or less if you cannot control your breathing. This will greatly affect your operational time at a crisis site.

In fact, a growing trend among endurance athletes is to wear gas masks or similar devices while working out, to in-

crease their lung function and lower breathing rates.

This would also be the perfect time to find out whether you are claustrophobic. Some people simply cannot operate for any period of time while wearing a mask. They start to feel like everything is closing in on them, and they begin to panic. If this is going to happen, the training environment is the place to find out. With time and training, some officers who are affected by claustrophobia will be able to overcome the effects. Others will never be able to.

## COMMUNICATION

Another aspect of wearing the mask that makes life more difficult is communicating with your partner. It is almost impossible to hear or understand someone who is yelling at you while they are wearing a mask. Their words will be indistinct and muffled. All you really get to hear are the adults from a Charlie Brown cartoon (am I dating myself here?).

To overcome this, officers should use and understand some basic hand and arm signals. The signals should be simple, direct and universally understood. In an actual event, this is not the time to make up a set of signals that could be misinterpreted.

If your agency is forward thinking and has the money, each mask should come with a voice modulator. This attach-



**Above:** Being able to access your gear without seeing it is critical.

**Left:** Mask with a voice modulator aids in communication.

**Below:** Doing a tire flip during PT with masks can build stamina and teach you to monitor your breathing.

ment will allow you to speak in a normal voice to others around you. These modulators are usually limited to tactical teams due to their expense, but they are great to have.

### SHOOTING WITH A GAS MASK

The fundamentals of shooting do not change while wearing a gas mask. They just become a little harder. Your stance, grip and trigger control all remain the same, but your sight alignment and sight picture will suffer.

Firing a handgun is not too hard because you can still hold the weapon out in front and line up your sights with the target. It becomes difficult when you cannot control your breathing due to exertion or stress or when your mask starts fogging up. Practice your reloads to develop tactile memory since you will not be able to see your magazines.

Also ensure you can clear any weapon stoppages or malfunctions. These tasks seem to take longer when wearing a mask.

Shooting your rifle becomes more difficult because the mask itself interferes with your ability to obtain a good stock to cheek weld. This prevents proper sight alignment, which affects your ability to place rounds on target.

If you cant the rifle inward in order to compensate for the mask and face shield, you will be able to align your sights and obtain a better sight picture. Depending on your mask and physical build, it may only be a slight cant, but some officers end up with almost a 45-degree cant.

Shooters also need to be aware that when you cant the rifle, you affect the impact of the round. Your weapon is sighted vertically, and when it is canted left or right, you change



the location of the bullet impact.

This is not too big a deal with a man-sized target out to about 75 yards, but if you are forced to take a close precision shot or a longer distance shot, aiming center mass will more than likely result in a miss or a low shot left or right. The cant of the rifle will cause the bullet to land low in the direction of the cant.

Go to the range and actually fire at distance on reactionary targets to determine how much change in bullet impact the cant on your rifle will cause.

For a right-handed shooter, aim high and to the right to compensate for the cant. Only through practice will you know how much offset is right for you at the distance you are shooting at.

Certain shooting positions should also be avoided. It is very difficult to shoot from a prone position and obtain a good sight picture. You will also probably lose the seal on your mask. Try various shooting positions to find out for yourself what works and what does not.

Rifles equipped with a red dot sighting system such as an Aimpoint or EOTech make shooting with a mask on much easier. Simply putting the dot on the target is much easier than aligning the front and rear sights with the target. It is also easier to see the illuminated dot with the mask on compared to the dark front-sight post. Another option is to equip your weapon system with a laser and simply place the targeting dot directly on your target.

### PRESCRIPTION LENSES

If you wear glasses or contact lenses, consider getting a set of prescription inserts for your mask. You cannot wear your regular glasses with your mask. If you wear contacts,



you may want to remove them prior to donning the mask. In a hostile environment, you will not be able to fix any problems that may occur if they begin to irritate your eyes.

### TRAINING

Train wearing your mask on a regular basis in order to become familiar with its limitations. With the popularity of force-on-force training, officers are required to use some sort of face protection. Why not use your gas mask instead of the Airsoft or Simunitions protective mask, at least on an occasional basis? The benefits will pay dividends in the long run.

If you are going to deploy with a partner or in a team, have a Safety Plan in place. Everyone should conduct "buddy checks" to see if a team member is having difficulty breathing, showing the effects of heat exhaustion or heatstroke or possibly the effects of the contaminant in the air. If so, the affected person needs to be evacuated from the area. The Operation Plan should have these contingencies accounted for.

### CONCLUSIONS

Hopefully the only time you ever have to wear your gas mask is in training. But there may come a time when you need to wear it in a high-risk situation and must use deadly force to protect yourself or someone else.

Take the time now to train with your mask so you master the skills required to operate effectively. This will ensure that the requisite skills become ingrained into your subconscious, and your threat response will be second nature. ☺

*Richard Meure has been a police officer for a Northern California police agency for the past 24 years. He is a member of his agency's tactical team and a member of a county-wide terrorism response team. He is also a certified firearms and defensive tactics instructor. He can be reached at [rick@blackknighttraining.com](mailto:rick@blackknighttraining.com).*



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# The WOLF PISTOL

## Custom-Built Combative Handgun

BY DAVE SPAULDING

I am going out on a limb and assume (yes, I know what it potentially means...) you are reading this article because you are concerned about your personal security.

Readers who gravitate to articles like this are usually *combative* in nature—those who are “ready and willing to fight” if no other alternative is available. They have considered the world as it really is, given critical thought to how to prepare, selected their equipment carefully, and then undertaken task-specific training so they can perform at

the highest possible level. Any of these stages left out means failure is a greater possibility. The more bases covered, the more likely one will prevail when a crisis arises.

### **SHEEP, WOLVES AND SHEEPDOGS**

Those who willingly enter this arena understand the concept of sheep, wolves and sheepdogs, namely that the world can be broken down into three types of humans. The sheep (AKA “sheeple”) are those who just la-la through life, focused on their latte and electronic



devices, have no idea what is going on in the world, and are more concerned with what Beyonce is wearing than what ISIS is doing.

The wolves are those who prey on the sheeple. They are everyone from hackers looking to steal your identity, to violent criminals who rob, rape and murder, to terrorists who do basically the same thing. What's the difference between a street killer and an international terrorist? Nothing, really—they both want to kill you. If they want to take what you have without compensation or by violent means, they are wolves.

The sheepdog is the individual who protects the sheeple from the wolves. The most obvious are law enforcement and the military, who are compensated and duty bound to stand between those who would prey upon society and the society they are sworn to protect. Sheeple call the sheepdogs when their world is disrupted, but then slam the sheepdogs when they have to see the ugliness of what protecting them really entails.

There is no kind, nice, simple, delicate way to deliver force. It is ugly, muddy, bloody and most unpleasant. It is not something to be glamorized or fantasized about, though many do.

Sheepdogs are not always cops or military. Many are legally armed citizens, those who draw a line in the sand and decide they will not be victims! I train these people every week and am damn proud to do so. They are the folks who make this country great.

### LIKE A WOLF

In 2010, I was awarded the Law Enforcement Trainer of the Year Award by the editorial board of *Law Officer Magazine* and the Board of Directors of The International Law Enforcement Education and Training Association (ILEETA), the largest LE training association in the world.

After accepting the award, I lectured on “Developing the Combative Mind” and then sat down with “Coach” Bob Lindsey, one of the most respected police trainers in the nation.

After listening to my lecture and discussing police training topics with me, Coach Lindsey gave me one of the nicest compliments I have ever received: “You know, there is no doubt you are a sheepdog, but after watching and

listening to you, I know there is a bit of wolf in there, too.”

I have spent a lifetime developing these wolf-like tendencies. You cannot combat the wolves unless you understand them, and to do this you must be a bit like them. So anyone who is a true sheepdog must be part wolf!

Understanding how the wolves think and preparing for the confrontation to come are vital. If it never comes, great, but this is not how wolves think—they are predators, so conflict is inevitable. The sheepdog deters the conflict by knowing it *will* come. Preparation is essential and part of this preparation is selecting the right gear.

Off-the-shelf equipment sometimes does not meet my needs, which is fine as I have no reservations about customizing my gear to maximize my performance. Some will tell you not to do this due to “liability,” but I would rather perform to my maximum level during the

confrontation and be here to explain it later than have equipment that does not rise to my expectations because I am worried about being sued after the fact. The choice is yours.

### THE PISTOL AS WOLF

I focus on the semiautomatic pistol as it is the firearm I am likely to have with me when hostilities break out. Since I like to customize my gear, I began to consider the warnings about modifying a factory gun to a custom tool. What if the gun were built from the ground up as custom, using parts from the same manufacturer? The gun would have the features I like but would not be “modified factory,” as the parts were built to be packaged together by the same company. With that in mind, I built what I call the “Wolf Pistol,” including those features I want in a fighting gun.

I have been impressed with the quality of components coming from Lone

**Author test-fired Wolf Pistol on sub-zero day in Ohio. If anything would stop the gun, these conditions would be it. Author called “uncle” before the gun did.**





**Above:** Author used reduced-size Vickers slide release from TangoDown so he could thumb manipulate the slide action.



**Left:** Lone Wolf stainless suppressor barrel was used on Wolf Pistol. Barrel added capability to the compact package, but little bulk.

**Right:** Lone Wolf UAT trigger system might be finest trigger author has used short of true sliding trigger of a 1911.

Wolf Distributors for many years. I have added their parts to various Glock pistols with great satisfaction and, as the company grew, so did the number of components offered.

Today, a complete “non-Glock” can be built from Lone Wolf parts without a single Glock factory part being used, so I decided to do so. This would allow me to have the grip configuration, trigger, sights, barrel, and other related features without modifying a factory Glock.

I selected the mid-size Model 19 frame and slide, because I consider this pistol both big enough and small enough. Compact guns are easy to carry, but when the feces hits the fan, they are not a “handful of gun,” making them more difficult to manipulate, shoot well, and fight with at a high level of effectiveness. Keep in mind that you

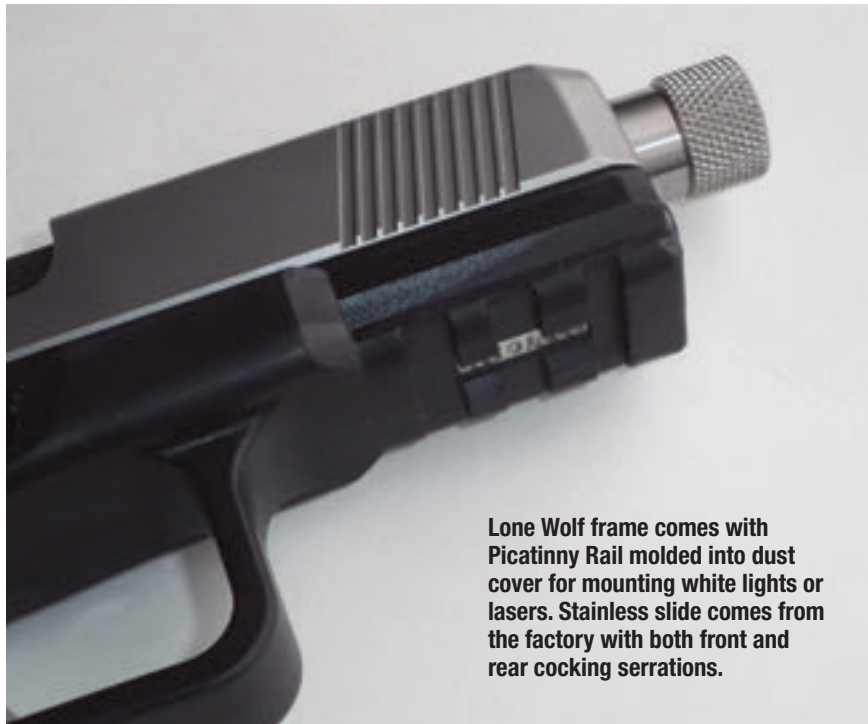


carry a handgun not as a fashion statement but a tool of personal security. Carry one that will enhance your ability to fight, not just “be armed.”

The Lone Wolf frame already has most of the features I would want if I were to have a gunsmith customize my pistol—a reduced grip frame and rounded trigger guard. What I did want to change on this grip were the finger grooves on the front strap, extended beaver tail, and a higher cut where the trigger guard meets the grip.

#### NO GLOCK PARTS

While not pretty, I was able to make these changes in about 15 minutes with the help of a Dremel tool and soldering iron. I used a grinding wheel on my Dremel to remove the finger grooves, reduce the beavertail, and cut a higher groove behind the trigger guard. I wanted to get my shooting hand as high as possible to the bore line to reduce recoil.



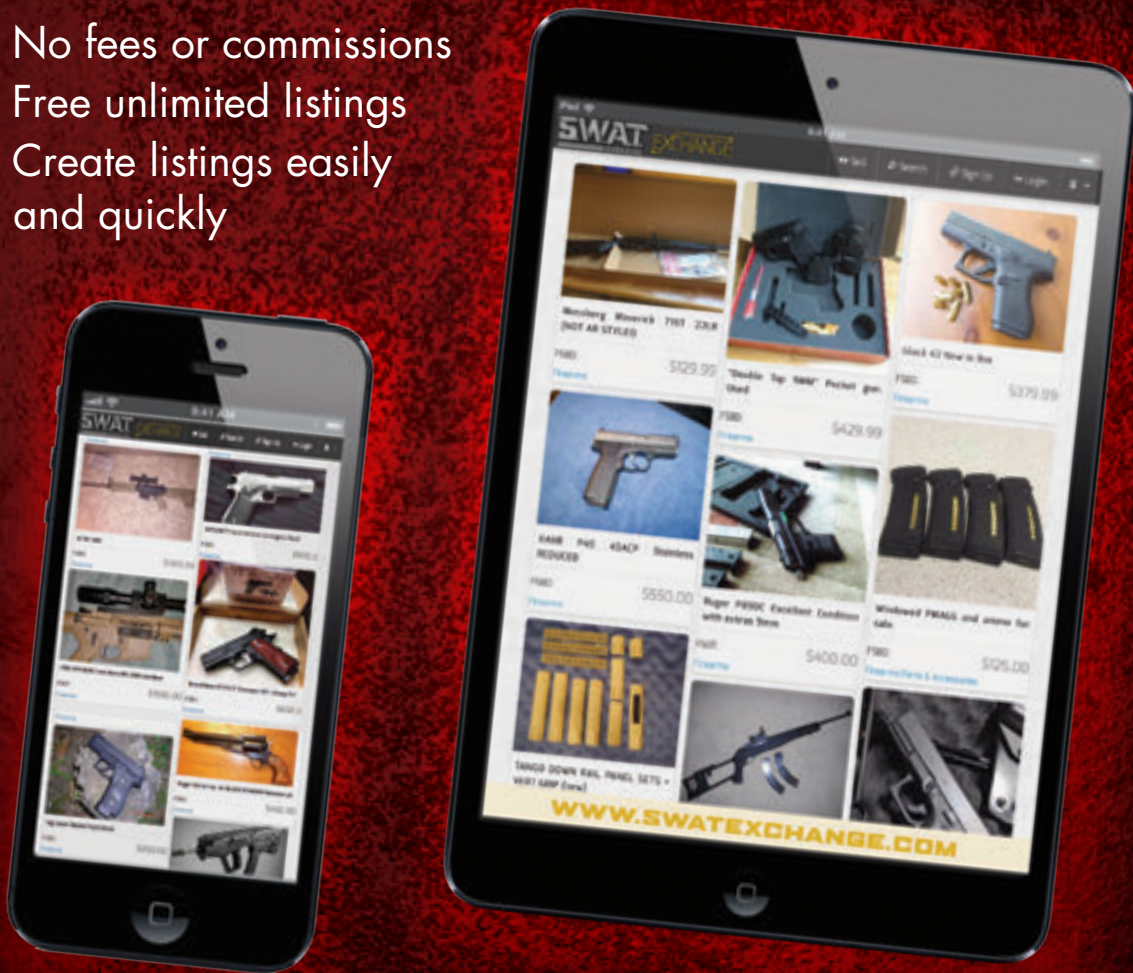
**Lone Wolf frame comes with Picatinny Rail molded into dust cover for mounting white lights or lasers. Stainless slide comes from the factory with both front and rear cocking serrations.**



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**Wolf Pistol was built from the ground up with parts from Lone Wolf, TangoDown, Heinie, and Wolff Gun Springs. No Glock factory parts were used.**

I then stippled the front strap with the soldering iron to a texture I liked. Again, not pretty, but quite effective both in function and price. Because the Lone Wolf frame is made with a Picatinny Rail system cut into the dust cover, mounting my favorite SureFire X300 was easy.

The stainless steel Lone Wolf slide comes equipped with front and rear cocking serrations, so no modifications were required. Lone Wolf can also supply slides with a Cerakote finish or cut to accept mini red dot sights.

I opted to add the excellent Heinie Figure Eight sights to my pistol, as I like the thin front sight married to a deep and narrow rear window that is also serrated. While I no longer believe tritium night sights are necessary, the Heinies are equipped with them and do help when used in inconsistent light environments. Richard Heinie makes some of the finest combat sights found anywhere—check them out.

A part I used that was not a Lone Wolf product was the TangoDown Vickers slide lock lever. It's similar to a stock Glock lever but offers additional surface area so it can be used as a slide release via the shooting or support hand thumb. I have used this method since the late 1970s. I did have to remove a bit of the lever at the rear to keep my shooting hand thumb from resting on it, but this is both fast and easy to do.

Using a stainless Lone Wolf barrel was a no-brainer. They have proven to offer a superior fit, are quite accurate, and allow for the shooting of any ammo style including lead bullets. I first bought a Lone Wolf barrel for a Glock when ammo was very hard to find and lead reloads were all that were available. The barrel worked great and I have not looked back since.

For this gun I opted for an extended suppressor-capable barrel, because suppressor use is becoming increasingly popular and adding another capability to the Wolf Pistol seemed like a good idea.

I incorporated a Lone Wolf captured recoil guide rod and spring, which shows caution against on a factory Glock frame. Glocks are designed to flex when fired, and according to Glock, a metal recoil guide rod can interfere with this. In addition, metal guide rods can eat up the inside of a stock Glock frame. The Lone Wolf



**Left: Finger grooves are fine if they fit you, which Lone Wolf grooves did not for the author. He removed them with a Dremel and stippled the grip with a soldering iron. Not pretty but quite effective.**



**Author selected X-Concealment/Templar CAP holster to carry Wolf Pistol.**

**Below: Pistol is just one component of a serious EDC package that should include a quality holster, spare ammo, cutting tool, and flashlight.**





frames are designed to accept the solid rod, so I used it on this pistol.

Another excellent Lone Wolf product I incorporated into this gun was their UAT trigger system. Short for Ultimate Adjustable Trigger, the UAT allows the end user to adjust both the pre- and over-travel of their trigger, reducing unwanted movement to a minimum.

I have long stated “trigger control is weapon control” and that whatever excessive motion you apply to the trigger translates through the whole gun, thus having a smooth, easy to manipulate trigger will result in better shooting. The UAT is quite ingenious, as it is both simple to do (it can be done with the trigger in the frame) and works very, very well.

Some will criticize the use of screw adjustments, but I solved this potential problem by adjusting my trigger where I wanted it and then Super Gluing the screws in place. After several thousand rounds, the screws in the trigger have not moved at all. The UAT is metal—if I ever wish to change the settings, I could do so with some heat applied with a heat gun.

#### DIFFERENT WOLVES

Last, but certainly not least, were the springs used to operate the Wolf Pistol. This was another place where I chose not to use Lone Wolf parts, but opted for another wolf product—in this case Wolff Gun Springs.

I have used Wolff Gun Springs since the early 1990s with excellent results. Many consumers do not realize most gun companies job out springs and, while they may operate “in spec,” they are not always consistent in quality. Wolff makes their own springs and the quality is always exceptionally high and consistent.

For the Wolf Pistol, I used a reduced-power safety plunger spring and six-pound trigger and striker springs, which resulted in a 5.25-pound smooth trigger with minimal slack and over-travel. The Wolf Pistol ended up as close to a 1911 trigger as a pivoting (in contrast to a sliding) trigger system can! Accuracy proved exceptional, with 25-yard off-hand shots staying inside a human heart-size target.

I mated the Wolf Pistol to a SureFire X300 weaponlight and an X-Concealment/Templar Custom CAP holster

for routine carry. SureFire, while a bit more expensive than other companies, makes lights that work all the time in a wide range of environments, something lesser quality lights cannot always say.

#### HOLSTER AND AMMO

The Combative Application Pistol (CAP) holster is my design and is manufactured by X-Concealment exclusively for Templar Custom Arms. It combines the convenience of a paddle rig with the stability of a belt holster and the close fit of a pancake-style rig.

I designed a “belt claw” that fits over both the belt and trouser band to hold the gun in tight while keeping it from traveling on the belt during routine wear. When you need to draw your fighting pistol, you need it *now*. Having to do a search due to holster shift is unacceptable.

I will feed my Wolf Pistol with one of several street-proven loads, to include Speer Gold Dot 124-grain +P, Federal HST 124-grain +P, and Winchester 127-grain +P+ Ranger T. These loads have proven to “hit above their weight class” in actual shootings and are exceptionally accurate from this handgun.

While 147-grain loadings in 9mm have greatly improved in recent years, the 9mm cartridge was designed around a 124-grain bullet, so it makes sense to me to stick with this bullet weight.

There you have it: my idea of a perfect fighting pistol without having to modify a factory handgun. I’m sure this will spark debate among the “legal eagles,” which is good.

In the end, you need to prevail in the fight first and be prepared to articulate why you did what you did after the fact—and this will include the tools you used. ©

*Dave Spaulding is a professional firearms instructor with 36 years’ experience in law enforcement and federal security. He is the recipient of ILEETA’s 2010 Law Enforcement Trainer of the Year award. In addition to his over 1,000 published articles, Dave is the author of two acclaimed books, Defensive Living and Handgun Combatives. He currently operates his own training company that focuses exclusively on the combative application of the handgun: [www.handguncombatives.com](http://www.handguncombatives.com).*



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Author's preferred plate carrier for full mission load-out: ATS Tactical Gear Aegis, loaded here for 7.62mm.

# PLATE CARRIERS



If you have ever worn a plate carrier for more than just a day on the flat range, you may be familiar with the seemingly never-ending evolution of your gear. This is especially true if you have a plate carrier for more than just an emergency scenario, meaning those in the military, law enforcement and other professions where carrying a weapon and going into harm's way are just parts of the daily job requirements. Having the right set-up with the right items and amounts and positioned to facilitate your tactical needs can be tricky. One must balance mission needs with accessibility and mobility when setting up your plate carrier in preparation for a fight.

The reason setting up plate carriers for tactical work is more complicated than a personal emergency set-up is that

## Rig Them Up Right

BY JEFF GURWITCH

those who use theirs for work usually have a lot more gear and equipment they need to carry to support the mission.

With an individual set-up, the wearer is most often thinking just of what he needs to get through a short confrontation—a few extra rifle and pistol mags and maybe a simple Individual First Aid Kit (IFAK). In setting up their kit, soldiers,



law enforcement and other professionals must take into account several factors: the mission, its duration, terrain, and threats, usually for an extended period of time (an all-day call-out or a multi-day operation). Because of this and the fact that they are most likely operating as a member of a team, the gear requirements are generally much more substantial.

Along with extra magazines, IFAKs are required, including tourniquets. Communications via at least one radio (perhaps more for some team members) and specialty items such as breaching tools and pyrotechnic marking devices like smoke grenades and flares. Don't forget sustainment items like food and water. Depending on the mission and duration, the list could go on and on.

Plate carriers have become popular because their slim, cut-down design offers maximum mobility and comfort while still giving the protection of front and rear ballistic plates. The downside is that plate carriers have a limited amount of webbing and space to mount items on.

The reduced space on your kit makes planning your load-out even more important. You don't want to be "that guy" in the middle of a mission saying, "Hey buddy, can you reach that pouch on my kit?" and possibly distracting a fellow assaulter from more important things.

#### **PLANNING PLATE CARRIER SET-UP**

Fighting items up front, support items in the back. That is the main rule I follow when rigging up any plate carrier for tactical work. This means I place all fighting items on the front, including all spare magazines and ammo, knives, explosives such as grenades, and anything else I need to defeat a threat.

From there, I place mission support items on the sides,

then on the back of the plate carrier. This includes med gear, communications, and sustainment items like water, extra batteries, marking gear, and NODS.

The reasoning for this is your first priority should be to keep yourself alive. Even if you have the best medical gear and communications equipment to call in help, it will do you and your team no good if you are down and out of the fight.

As an assaulter, your first priority is to have the maximum ability to engage threats during a gunfight. For you to be able to do this, you must put your killing items where they can most easily be accessed. You cannot destroy the enemy if you have no accessible ammunition.

I realize this technique might raise questions of, "How do you reach your IFAK to treat yourself or someone else? Or reach your radio to change freqs if they are not on the front of your carrier?" Good questions—both of which I will answer in the exact breakdown of every item typically needed for a full mission roll-out.

#### **FULL MISSION LOAD-OUT: WHAT, HOW MANY, AND WHERE**

The first item you need is spare ammunition. The question that always arises is, how many magazines make up a good basic load? One can take any number of approaches to answer this. Look at after-action reports from firefights to see the typical number of rounds shooters fired. Look at the overall weight of the ammunition, though yours may have already been determined by your unit SOP.

Due to my experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, I have always based my load on weight. I can comfortably carry six magazines of 5.56mm (180 rounds) and five 20-round mags



Ready to go with three mags of 5.56mm, two 9mm mags, C-A-T tourniquet, and ATS small utility pouch for IFAK items, Brigandine Plate carrier from Patrol Incident Gear makes a great emergency plate carrier. But author finds it doesn't have enough MOLLE space for all the items needed for full combat use.



Full load-out for 5.56mm.

Full load-out for 7.62mm.



To change load-out from 5.56 to 7.62 requires only changing out three pouches.

of 7.62mm on my plate carrier for an extended period of time. I can carry this pretty comfortably for 36 to 72 hours over varied terrain. For 5.56mm, the most common caliber, the six-magazine load also coincides with the Army's basic load of seven magazines total (one in your weapon, six on you).

The Army basic load of seven magazines has been standard since I joined the Army in 1990, though I do not know the exact date the Army went to it. But whoever thought this up seemed to know what they were doing, since this amount was based on the old Alice gear with no body armor factored in. It still works as a good base amount today.

I have rolled out with more on my kit before—up to ten magazines—but that was

only on missions with very short movements (less than 100 meters from vehicle to a breach point). But after a few hours, that many magazines with everything else I needed to carry got old pretty fast.

What I prefer to do now—and this matches what a lot of my peers do—is pack extra magazines in small go-bags. Instead of humping around ten magazines on my kit all day, I have the ability to take the bag and leave it staged somewhere. I just have my go-bag packed in my infil platform and if needed have it dropped off or go back to it for re-supply of ammunition.



### THE HAPPY MAG

When MOLLE webbing first came out some years ago, the first magazine pouches had top closing flaps as the primary method of magazine retention. While this design was great for securing magazines, it did not make for the fastest reloads.

To have at least one magazine ready for an emergency bolt-lock re-load, we would have one magazine pouch with the top flap tucked into the pouch, exposing the magazine. We called this a “happy mag.”

This allowed one magazine available just for a quick re-load. We didn’t do this to all the magazine pouches—the top flap being the primary method of securing mags—because there was always a chance of losing mags from running or climbing. Doing it to only one pouch was a compromise between having secure kit and having one magazine ready for an emergency. Today that is not much of an issue, because most magazine pouches being used are of the open-top design that secure magazines through some sort of bungee, elastic tension, or both.

A natural fit for most plate carriers are the triple-shingle types. You can run a single row across your front or double up two shingles to have six mags right there on the front ready to go. I prefer to have the slimmest possible profile, so I only run one row. Two rows of magazines on the front can make for a tight squeeze in some of the vehicles I work in.

Even with the open-top design of all my nylon pouches, I still employ one happy mag in the form of an ITW FastMag holder. I find the hard polymer body of the FastMag provides for a very fast reload if I need it over that of the nylon pouches. For magazine management, I work from my nylon pouches and only draw from my FastMag when I have to reload under pressure and time is of the essence.

If I am just topping off with a tactical reload, I always try to draw from the farthest magazines on my kit first. For me that’s my support-hand side. If that’s not possible due to being deep in it and the focus is on keeping the rifle topped off as fast as I can, I pull via the fastest means from my front shingle of three.

When there’s time—a lull in the action, prior to making another movement, or things calm down—I rotate full mags to the front of my kit and place the partials to the back. I place these partial mags bullet side up so when searching for full magazines, I can do it by feel. Full mags base up, partials bullets up.

### MEDICAL GEAR

The next item of importance is medical gear. If you are prepping for a gunfight, you must plan for casualties, either yourself or others. The Individual First Aid Kit (IFAK) is the most common solution to this need. As its name implies the intent of the IFAK is for it to be used on yourself if you become wounded, either by treating yourself with it or a fellow operator pulling it off you and treating you with its contents. Because of this, it’s intended for the user to wear on the front of their plate carrier somewhere they can reach it.

I have two problems with this. First, unless you layer it over a magazine pouch, placing an IFAK toward the front usually takes up space needed for extra magazines or other gear you need to fight with. Also even the slim design of most IFAKs sticks out some. Nothing like watching someone try to draw their pistol up and around an IFAK sticking off their carrier.



**ATS tear-away medical pouch, a great IFAK that supports author’s SOP of wearing IFAK on his back. While kneeling down to treat a casualty, whoever is pulling security for you can pull it off your back and drop it at your feet. This is much faster than digging around in the casualty’s gear looking for their IFAK.**

This brings up another good principle to follow when rigging up your carrier: leave your pistol side as slick as possible on your plate carrier, so you can draw smoothly.

Back to the IFAK placement issue: the second problem wearing it on the front is what I have the biggest issue with. It is assumed that if you’re wounded, you’re going to fall on your back, positioning your IFAK within easy reach of whoever is coming to your aid. But what happens if you’re wounded and fall lying face down? Or even worse, what if half your gear is burnt or blown off? Where is your IFAK then?



**Back of plate carrier. Hydration tube and communications cables are positively secured. Also on the back are custom Kydex radio pouch and one-liter hydration bladder carrier.**



Tubular nylon on back of carrier is a trick of the trade developed by the Direct Action Resource Center. It is a pull-out casualty drag handle to replace most plate carriers' built-in handle, which tends to pull up and sometimes off the carrier while someone is trying to drag a casualty. Clip the snap link at the bottom to the belt while you wear the carrier. Because the carrier is snap linked into your belt, your carrier won't ride up, plus it pulls up on your hips, making you easier to drag.



Aside from one hand grenade and a 152 radio, this is everything author typically carries on mission: six 5.56mm mags, one spare 9mm mag, two chest seals (one in each side plate pocket), Gerber knife, one IFAK (complete), two tourniquets, and a remote that controls the radio while wearing it on the back. GP pouch contains SOURCE UTA, GPS, casualty feeder cards, signal mirror, pens, all-weather notebook, wrist compass, small map light, water purification tablets, IR strobe light for helmet, and extra green weenies (plastic tubes to hook detention cord together).

This is where the idea of “the IFAK is for your treatment” I find flawed. Precious time can be lost if the person trying to treat you is digging around in your possibly bloodied-up kit rolling you around looking for your IFAK.

Furthermore, if you've been wounded in the torso, the first thing any medical person will do in their primary survey is take off or cut off all your gear to expose the wounded area. That will most likely result in all your gear being thrown off to the side. Someone intent on using your IFAK will have to search through your pile of kit to find it. Again, precious time is lost.

### RECOMMENDED IFAK SOP

I have all team members wear their IFAKs toward the back of their kit (on their back plate if they choose). Instead of thinking the IFAK you wear is for you, I prefer to use it on others.

The way to employ it is: when you come upon a casualty and kneel down to assess and treat, whoever is pulling security for you reaches down and pulls out the contents (or pulls off your IFAK if it's detachable) and drops the contents at your feet by the casualty. Now instead of trying to dig around in their kit—assuming they are face up and their IFAK is still intact—you have all your medical items in front of you at your disposal.

With everyone on the team wearing their IFAKs on their backs, this follows the principle of fighting stuff up front. As a team SOP, this works better than having IFAKs on the front. You still have the option of using the wounded soldier's IFAK if it's readily accessible, but why play the odds game that the casualty will fall just right, exposing his IFAK for you to use? Or worse, cause further injury to a casualty because you are rolling him around looking for his medical items?

How does one self-treat with this SOP? Simple. While I do recommend the IFAK be on the back of your kit, keep some must-haves like tourniquets up front. Also I do not limit medical gear just to an IFAK pouch. If your plate carrier has side plate pockets (with or without plates in them), they are the perfect place for storing chest seals and flat packs of combat gauze.

Another great spot I have seen to stuff combat gauze or small dressings is in between your plate carrier shoulder straps and shoulder pads. Leave just enough sticking out of the front to grab and pull out if you need to plug yourself or someone else.

### TOURNIQUETS

If you're expecting combat, tourniquets are a must-have item on your carrier. I always carry at least two, one on the front of my carrier and one on the side or in the IFAK. Be able to reach and pull off the one on the front with either hand. This way if you are wounded in one arm, you can still treat yourself. Or wear one on both sides of your plate carrier for the same reason. I recommend having multiples because it may take more than one to stop the bleeding, and if you treat someone else with one, it still leaves at least one for you.

Furthermore, tourniquets can break. If the ones you carry have a plastic tensioning rod, exposure to the sun and elements can weaken it over time, causing it to snap when you try to torque it down. If they have the plastic rod, replace your tourniquets between deployments or once a year. With tourniquets, the adage “two is one and one is none” really applies.



# ATS TACTICAL GEAR

My plate carrier of choice is the ATS Tactical Gear Aegis. Michael Lose, owner of ATS, is a former Green Beret with combat experience from Afghanistan and elsewhere in the world. We actually graduated the SF "Q" course together in 1998. Because Mike's background is Special Forces, he is able to apply his knowledge of how an SF operator uses his gear, and match soldier's needs to his designs.

Not all Special Operation units operate the same way or have the same gear requirements. To get gear developed by someone with direct experience with what I'm looking for puts ATS Tactical Gear at the top of my list. All ATS gear is 100% American made (something many other tactical nylon manufacturers cannot say).



**Attention to detail is just one reason author chooses ATS Tactical Gear products. Most manufacturers' pull-tabs do not have extra friction tape on them. Pull-tabs on ATS triple shingle are called "Slip Not." ATS goes the extra distance to ensure their gear is shooter ready.**

## COMMUNICATIONS AND SUSTAINMENT ITEMS

Place communications gear like radios out of the way on the back of the plate carrier. If it's mounted up front, it takes away from space you can use for more magazines and fighting gear. This only works if you can control the radio via a remote cable or device you can get to yourself. If you do not have a remote device that lets you change frequencies and volume, you must position your radio within reach on your carrier to where you can operate from your kit.

Another must-have for any full kit set-up is water. Because of the cramped spaces in some military vehicles, some soldiers (especially drivers) opt out of wearing a water bladder on their back. Their solution is to have water in their go-bags. I personally do not go anywhere without water. I do agree that many hydration bladders and carriers are too big for plate carriers. Multi-liter bladders tend to hang below the back plate.

One solution I highly recommend is the SOURCE Tactical Gear one-liter Kangaroo bladder. It is a very compact hydration bladder that fits perfectly with plate carrier-style body armor. Though one liter is not a huge amount of water, you have the equivalent of one GI canteen's worth of water on you. Just the right amount for short excursions away from your vehicle or infil platform.

While other great mini-bladders are on the market, the SOURCE brand is unique because of the way you refill it. You can top it off without having to take your plate carrier off or take the bladder out. Using their Universal Tube Adaptor (UTA) accessory, you can pour bottles of water right into the

bladder via the drinking tube or hook the UTA to a faucet and fill up without taking off your kit. This makes staying topped off with water very easy. Having used this system downrange once already, I highly recommend it to anyone looking for a hydration pack for their kit.

One more must-have item is a small general-purpose pouch mounted opposite of pistol side. It's great for carrying additional items such as compasses, GPS devices, signaling devices like mirrors and flares, plus sustainment items like water purification tablets and energy or protein bars. Any small item you think you might need, a GP pouch gives you the ability to have it on hand.

## WRAP UP

Most successful tactical operations can be attributed to extensive planning and preparation prior to the mission. The same extensive planning and preparation should be taken when choosing and setting up your kit.

Having your plate carrier set up with the right amounts of accessible ammunition, medical and support gear—balanced with protection and mobility—is key to keeping yourself and your fellow assaulters on top during a gunfight or other tactical situation. ☺

*Jeff Gurwitch has 23 years' military experience, the past 16 with U.S. Army Special Forces. He served in the first Gulf War, three tours OIF, and two tours OEF. He is currently on his seventh deployment to the region. He has been a competitive shooter for over a dozen years, competing in USP-SA, IDPA, and 3-Gun.*

## SOURCES

### ATS TACTICAL GEAR

(270) 439-0302  
www.atstacticalgear.com

### DIRECT ACTION RESOURCE CENTER

(501) 955-0007  
www.darc1.com

### PATROL INCIDENT GEAR

www.patrolincidentgear.com

### SOURCE TACTICAL GEAR

www.sourcetacticalgear.com



If you have an old K-Frame like this nickel-plated Model 10, don't think you need to trade it in on a self-loader to be adequately armed. Dust it off and use it! It might surprise you how well it shoots, and how well you can run it with practice.

# THE OTHER M&P

## Smith & Wesson Classic Fighter

BY KEVIN MCPHERSON

Walk into any gun store and ask about double-action revolvers as carry guns. Chances are you'll be directed to the J-Frame section. Any reputable shop will likely have at least a few of them stocked. Small alloy-frame five-shot revolvers offered by Smith & Wesson, Charter Arms, and Taurus (and Ruger's polymer-frame LCR) have great appeal because they are convenient to pack.

They're typically considered close to the bare minimum based on the .38's marginal power and the little gun's limited ammunition capacity. Judging by the popularity of these guns, lots of folks take the minimalist approach. Unfortunately, the virtues that make them easy to carry also make them difficult to shoot well.

The J-Frame checks the boxes next to the strongest suits of revolvers—simplicity and reliability. It has great merit as

a deep cover gun when nothing else can be hidden or when weight is the major factor. I carry one in a small fanny pack when riding a bicycle, but it's a second gun when I'm in street clothes unless the choice comes down to a J-Frame or no gun at all. A 642 in your pocket certainly beats a 1911 in your truck when you really need it inside the convenience store, but the J-Frame comes to the gunfight with multiple handicaps. The old K-Frame M&P does away with most of those handicaps.

### J-FRAME OR K-FRAME?

Obviously, the K-Frame holds one additional round of ammunition. With a revolver, one more is a big deal. The full-length extractor rod standard with three-inch and longer barrels makes extracting and ejecting empties much surer and facilitates faster reloads. Extractor rod length is rarely a consideration when buying a revolver or shooting it for leisure. It



becomes a huge factor when you need to reload with urgency. The slight size increase in the frame, cylinder window, and most of the parts makes the gun easier to manipulate overall.

A +P round that's painful to fire from an alloy J-Frame is comfortable from a steel K-Frame with a three- or four-inch barrel. The larger size of the K's grip frame provides more to hold onto and can be custom fit to the shooter's hand with a choice of different stocks. Using stocks that trace the frame profile minimizes size for concealment.

Smooth wood or hard synthetic stocks allow cover garments to slide over them without catching or bunching up. It's easy to swap for larger stocks with some recoil-absorbing cushion for extended shooting sessions or when hiding the gun isn't important.

The 1 $\frac{7}{8}$ -inch barrel standard on J-Frames is a challenging laboratory in which to produce complete combustion with most powders. Really short barrels rarely achieve factory published velocities, even if the ammunition was developed specifically for short barrels. The longer barrels normally found on K-Frames produce higher velocity and more energy. This boost in performance nudges the .38 Special from marginal to acceptable.

The sights on most production J-Frames are pretty basic. The K's longer sight radius and larger sights make delivering accurate fire more likely. The K-Frame's mass around the moving parts makes the trigger pull feel better, even if the pull weight is identical to the J-Frame's. Pulling the trigger doesn't push the heavier gun around like it does the lightweight snub-nose.

While an alloy J-Frame may be as intrinsically accurate as its bigger brother, in practical application the big gun's trigger is much more forgiving. Again, this equals better hits.

### VELOCITY MEASUREMENTS

I recently measured velocities of four carry loads with common bullet weights in a J-Frame 442, three-inch Model 65, and four-inch Model 10. The average velocities from five-shot strings are listed in the table on page 78. The additional barrel length of the three-inch gun yields a huge gain in velocity over the J-Frame. The jump from three to four inches is not as dramatic, but still increased 50 feet-per-second (fps) or more with three of the four loads. If kinetic energy impresses you, the J-Frame likely will not.

Both K-Frames used were selected because they had fixed sights like the small gun. I fired through the chronograph screens using a bean-bag rest for support. While doing so, groups were fired on paper at 20 yards with each barrel length. Twenty yards may seem like a long way for a J-Frame, but is not an unrealistic range for a carry gun. Shooting supported slow fire isn't particularly "combat relevant," but the longer K-Frames sure shot better at that range.

### RANGE DRILLS

While on the range, I had two shooters familiar and skilled with revolvers conduct a simple impromptu drill with the 442 and the tapered barrel Model 10. The shooters drew on a timer prompt, fired until empty, reloaded with a speedloader, and emptied the gun again. Distance was five yards, using the same holsters and Safariland speedloaders snapped in a DeSantis pouch. Ammunition was the Remington 125-grain +P GSHP. I asked the shooters to make good center chest hits on a human silhouette.

Shooter A had drama on the J-Frame reload as the emp-



**Three-inch Model 65 has a full-length extractor rod, but 642 sports an abbreviated version because of its short barrel. Three-inch version is much more effective at clearing empties.**

ties wouldn't fully eject on the first attempt. He had to re-grip, strike the extractor rod again, and then pluck two empty cases out with his fingers. Shooter A established a sight picture for every shot and his groups showed it. All good hits, with the K-Frame group being significantly tighter.

Shooter B fired faster, but admitted to a flash sight picture on the first round and hammering away on subsequent shots, trusting his natural point of aim. Although not as tight as Shooter A, all hits stayed in the "A" zone of high center mass. Shooter B's K-Frame group was better than his J-Frame



**If you're seeking proficiency with a .357 Magnum, a three-inch K-Frame is the smallest revolver that will keep recoil manageable. A three-inch Model 66 is hard to beat as a carry gun.**

group, but not by as large a margin as Shooter A.

Both shooters shot the drill faster with the K-Frame even though they were firing two more rounds than with the J-Frame. Both also showed tighter shot placement with the K-Frame. The J-Frame's shorter extractor rod reared its ugly head for both shooters, as Shooter B also had difficulty ejecting empties after firing his second series of five rounds.

#### J- AND K-FRAME CHAMBERINGS

The fact that the J-Frame couldn't muster 200 foot pounds of energy wasn't lost on those who lobbied S&W to chamber the J for the .357 Magnum. You won't find many people willing to argue against the effectiveness of the .357 as an antipersonnel round—it's well proven.

But a lightweight J-Frame so cham-

bered boosts recoil to an obscene level. Felt recoil is already one of the big negatives in a 15-ounce revolver chambered for the .38. The Magnum version is ridiculous. Smith builds lots of them to satisfy demand—they sell like crazy—but I don't know anybody who shoots Magnums through these snotty little beasts for fun.

A steel-frame three-inch gun is the smallest size gun truly practical for the .357 if you actually plan to shoot it. The Magnum generates tremendous blast and punchy recoil, but it becomes tolerable in this platform with practice.

The K-Frame was originally designed around the .38. It wasn't until 1955 that S&W improved their metallurgy sufficiently to handle Magnum pressures. There's a reason that Smith introduced the L-Frame in 1980. History proved that a habitual diet of Magnums was rough on a K-Frame. The L-Frame is

hardier, but it doesn't rate the title "readily concealed" for most people.

A .357 K-Frame in trained hands stands at the very top of carry gun choices, but there's nothing wrong with .38 versions. The Model 10 M&P was the company's bread and butter for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Instead of supercharging the J-Frame with the Magnum, maybe maximizing the Special with a K-Frame makes more sense.

The *Lyman 3rd Edition Pistol and Revolver Handbook* says of the humble Special: "*The .38 Special is accurate, has reasonable power and is easy to control, making it one of the most successful handgun cartridges ever.*" Lyman used a four-inch barrel to test loads—the good reputation that the .38 Special has earned largely depends on that barrel length.

The .38 Special is an easy cartridge to reload, straightforward and efficient.

### » AMMUNITION PERFORMANCE

.38 SPECIAL AMMUNITION	ADVERTISED VELOCITY	S&W M442, 1-7/8-inch barrel	S&W M65, 3-inch barrel	S&W M10, 4-inch barrel
Corbon 110-gr. +P DPX	1,050 fps	809 fps	957 fps	1,018 fps
Remington 125-gr. +P GSHP	975 fps	841 fps	956 fps	1,024 fps
Speer 135-gr. +P GDHP	860 fps	774 fps	920 fps	946 fps
Winchester 158-gr. +P SWCHP	890 fps	754 fps	849 fps	899 fps

Rear sky screen ten feet from muzzle, temperature 55 degrees Fahrenheit, elevation 5,895 feet.



Targets show best five-shot groups fired with typical carry ammo with each gun from 20 yards. Larger K-Frames shot better.



Commercial cast bullets provide an economical source for high-volume practice rounds. Keith bullets (RCBS 38-150-KT and 173-grain Lyman 358429) and 160-grain WFNs shoot really well in most .38s and can be driven 950 to 1,050 fps without beating up guns. The flat meplats on these great bullets hit hard.

Properly sized and lubed cast bullets generate less bore friction than jacketed bullets of the same weight. This equals more velocity and less pressure. The old FBI load (+P 158-grain SWCHP) had a pretty good record as a fight stopper back in the day. Older K-Frame fixed sights were regulated for 158-grain bullets, so the heavyweights hit where you aim them.

Cops used to shoot lead .38s in their Combat Magnums for practice and save the 125-grain JHPs for duty use. This practice prolonged the life of K-Frames and helped officers build proficiency.

Fireside wisdom in the 1980s was to shoot a cylinder full of jacketed bullet loads through the gun after a day of practice with cast bullets to “clean out” lead deposits. Don’t do it! Many a K-Frame was unknowingly wrecked by applying this dangerous practice.

A non-yielding jacketed bullet forced down a severely lead-fouled bore can split the barrel where it protrudes unsupported into the cylinder window. Remove lead build-up in the forcing cone with a stiff bore brush or Lewis Lead Remover *before* firing jacketed bullets. The same tools can be used to clean the carbon/lead ring from the charge holes that develops when shooting lots of .38s in a Magnum cylinder. Left untended, this residue will eventually prevent Magnums from chambering until removed.

#### CARRYING THE K-FRAME

Yes, you sacrifice ease of concealment and light weight to bump up a frame size. But the gain in hit potential, ballistic performance, and handling qualities realized with the bigger gun may be worth compromising a little space



Because of their weight and larger dimensions, K-Frames carry best at waist level with a sturdy belt. Three-inch 66 rides in a Bianchi Pistol Pocket ITP.



Most .38 Specials, like this stainless Combat Masterpiece (Model 67), shoot cast bullets really well. Lead bullets aren’t just for practice. The old 158-grain FBI load (Federal’s version pictured) is a proven fighting round. Heavy flat-nose cast bullets hit hard and penetrate deeply, even at .38 velocities.

and weight. A K-Frame carries best in a belt holster—either inside or outside the pants. A good gun belt and well-designed holster go a long way toward stabilizing the gun and negating the extra weight. Shoulder holsters and off-body carry are options if these methods agree with you. Ankle carry and pocket carry are basically forfeited with the larger gun.

A three-inch K-Frame occupies roughly the same amount of space as a Glock 19. A bull-barreled four-inch version makes a footprint similar to a full-size auto. Some may question carrying the revolver when the semi-auto holds



Smith & Wesson M&Ps. Four-inch Model 65 .357 Magnum hides about like a full-size M&P9. Revolver lacks younger M&P’s capacity, but it’s still a very worthy carry gun.



Stocks can be easily tailored to the mission. Both of these revolvers have round butt frames. Precision Gun Specialties Hideout grips (bottom) made of hard nylon minimize profile and allow clothing to slide over them. Larger, softer grips like Hogue’s Monogrip make extended shooting sessions more enjoyable.

much more ammo. An observation: large magazine capacity does not equate to winning gunfights. Shot placement does—particularly with handguns.

Suppressive fire as a tactic in most domestic encounters will be frowned upon in a courtroom. The old adage “if you only have six in your gun, you’re more likely to make them count” holds some water. M&Ps soldier on as legitimate personal defense weapons in our digital age because they work.

Clint Smith once wisely stated, “If everyone in this country had a Model 10 and practiced with it a lot, we would be a very dangerous nation, indeed.” ☺

## » SHOOTER PERFORMANCE

SHOOTER	J-FRAME M442	K-FRAME M10
A	10 rounds in 19.87 seconds	12 rounds in 14.19 seconds
B	10 rounds in 12.76 seconds	12 rounds in 11.13 seconds

## SOURCE

**SMITH & WESSON**  
(800) 331-0852  
www.smith-wesson.com





**MULTI-DISCIPLINE**  
**COMBAT**  
**ARTIST**



# Firearms Training with a Martial Arts Master

BY TODD BURGREN

Many members of the gun culture tend to rely on the latest gear and equipment, often associating this with proficiency in lieu of quality training. This can be attributed to many factors, including the gun media hyping the latest products, the psychology of not wanting to lose a perceived arms race against others, and the demands of training in terms of time and money. I will allow that gear can contribute to effectiveness, with the caveat that proper training in using it is more important.

The more I train with firearms, the more I realize that open-hand skills make up an equal component of personal defense proficiency. In many ways, skill with your hands can be considered even more valuable than relying solely on firearms. Skill with both provides users with response

options. Not every defensive encounter warrants a firearm, and a firearm may not be readily available either due to close distances or situational constraints such as being in a non-permissive environment for firearms.

I have been fortunate to attend a broad spectrum of training from highly regarded individuals specializing in knife, open hand and firearms. Most note that well-rounded training is the best approach.

But few trainers can claim the credentials that offer expertise with both open hand and firearms, because it is the rare person who can master such diverse skill sets then want to instruct and share his knowledge. When this rare commodity of an instructor is found, the experience needs to be shared.

## GEORGE WEHBY II

I recently found such an instructor in George Wehby II, who has over 17 years of experience in military, law enforcement, and security fields. This is buttressed by 27 years being actively engaged in martial arts as a student, fighter and instructor. Wehby's career has spanned a wide gamut, from subject matter expert/host on Personal Defense TV to firearms and tactics instructor for Triple Canopy, Federal Air Marshal, police officer, and Presidential Marine Sentry.

Wehby's commitment to martial arts proficiency is evident by his multiple Black Belts in different disciplines: Black Belt, Brazilian Jiu-jitsu (Tony Passos, ATOS Brazilian Jiu-jitsu Association); Black Belt, Nisei Kito Ryu Jiu-jitsu (Sergio DeCasien, National Martial Arts Association); and Black Belt, Goju Ryu Karate (Bob Roach, South Jersey Martial Arts).

Wehby's background means little if he cannot effectively relay his knowledge. His commitment to instructing is evident, as he owns and operates the MMA Institute of Winchester. Wehby is very active with conducting his Firearm & Personal Defense Seminars around the country. This is how I came about working with him for this article.



Wehby reviews use of cover during force-on-force training evolution.

Opposite: Wehby demonstrates proper draw technique.

## MARTIAL PHILOSOPHY

I attended a Wehby Seminar focused on handgun skills at Echo Valley Training Center (EVTC). I used a Glock 34 in a BlackHawk Standard holster. The G34 had Warren Tactical Sevigny Carry iron sights installed. The Sevigny Carry rear sight is wider than a standard sight, allowing for daylight around the front sight for more precise aiming and easier observation of the target.

Handgun training is the most relevant type of preparation for law enforcement officers or citizens who practice concealed carry. Ironically, proficiency with a handgun is the hardest skill set to learn and the most perishable of weapons manipulation skills. One must constantly train and practice to retain any hard-earned handgun skills.

Wehby is just as much about mindset as developing specific handgun skills. I will do my best to describe the full range of what I experienced, but you must see it for yourself to fully comprehend. With some instructors, you come away with the feeling that one class is enough—move on, as there is no more to gain. You come away from interacting with Wehby knowing there is much more to learn and develop.

Wehby's mix of martial arts background with firearms, while subtle, is



clear upon reflection. When queried about this, Wehby responded, "I am a firm believer in systems, methods and concepts. I believe everything should be tested in as close to the environment to which it will be used as possible. I think training (beyond base skill development) without stress and some form of resistance is flawed. If you cannot prove to yourself in a resistant, high-stress scenario that your skill set is usable, then any confidence is delusion or wishful thinking and most likely a copout or excuse. Like Bruce Lee said about breaking boards, boards don't hit back. Paper and cardboard are not trying to hurt or kill you. The training paradigm of MMA (mixed martial arts) is key. How skill is developed in MMA can directly transfer to weapons and tactics."

There is no doubting Wehby's lethality with his hands and firearms. His no-holds-barred honesty in describing violence and how to deal with it has led to his commitment to hardcore realistic training for those interested.

Wehby's seminar is not about ego stroking. He is not there to make you feel great about yourself by only doing

training evolutions that play to your strengths. He feels this does a disservice to anyone who is truly committed to preparing and training for the chaos of violence in a deadly encounter.

#### HANDGUN SKILLS SEMINAR

One must get outside their comfort zone to increase proficiency. The main topic of the seminar was integrating the handgun into the close-combat realm. The training was up-close, very personal, and unique.

No seminar will bring you to the proficiency level exhibited by someone like Wehby, who has practiced his craft his entire adult life. But a gifted instructor like Wehby can offer kernels of knowledge that can prove useful in an encounter.

A seminar will also give you something to build on for further training. Wehby's real-world experience, combined with his understanding of CQB techniques, proves very useful in making sure those kernels of knowledge have relevant bearing. He proved adept at introducing the uncomfortable world of violence with just the right blend of shock and support.

Wehby started the seminar with the obligatory safety brief and a quick transition into handgun basics, but Wehby conducted it with his own nuances. As most know, basics are the foundation that all must return to in order to maintain effectiveness. After all, "advanced" shooting methods are the basics done faster.

Wehby's intensive handgun training background, especially with the Air Marshals, combined with his gift of instruction, brought home the importance of grip, trigger control and sight alignment.

Wehby moved the class through a variety of structured drills involving:

- 1) dry fire, stressing trigger pull and drawstroke
- 2) live-fire warm-up focusing on sight alignment
- 3) live-fire dial-in involving specified round counts and magazine changes
- 4) stress fire involving surprise scenarios with trainee hooded until randomly arranged targets were revealed
- 5) sparring scenarios with Simunition

Two major points separate Wehby from most other instructors I've experienced. First is his insistence on



**Above:** Active shooter scenario simulated by random no-shoot targets floated in front of student who was trying to engage threat downrange.

**Inset:** Student engages targets upon Wehby's command.





turning a square-range setting into the most dynamic environment possible while maintaining safety. For Wehby, it is not about the number of rounds fired; rather it is about opening the students' minds.

One method used is sitting a student down with a hood on his head while Wehby and fellow students place shoot and no-shoot targets into a specific scenario. When the hood is removed, the student is faced with an unpredictable situation on how best to act in terms of engaging or not, target order, seeking cover, etc.

### FORCE-ON-FORCE SCENARIOS

The second distinguishing point for Wehby is his urge to "proof" techniques and concepts via force-on-force drills. For Wehby, force-on-force is in effect the same as sparring in the MMA realm. The unpredictable rules within force-on-force are what make it such a valuable training tool. Conducting marksmanship-based range drills alone will not prepare you for a gunfight.

Wehby is convinced and committed to testing range work to see if it will hold up under true CQB pressure, while at the same time educating students as much as possible about the true dynamics of a handgun engagement. We cannot do either of these things on a square range for obvious safety reasons.

This is where force-on-force with Simunition, Airsoft, and UTM come into play. We utilized Simunition for the Wehby EVTC seminar. Wehby set up tightly constrained drills to show students the value of movement and effective use of cover. There is nothing like getting "zipped" by a Simunition round to reinforce that moving is more important than standing still. Not getting shot is more important than achieving perfect stance and/or sight alignment.

Wehby is a proponent of force-on-force scenarios that are tightly controlled and do not spin out of control with participants doing things they would never dream of with live rounds. He proved very capable of presenting the dynamics of close-quarters pistolcraft, regardless of the skill level of the participant. Here is where Wehby's experience and back-



Training stress was slowly ratcheted up during the seminar, beginning with shooting on a timer.

ground in martial arts influence his thought process on training.

Wehby believes that stress/chaos (or as close to it as possible in a training environment) is best experienced while training versus encountering it for the first time when your life is at stake. If Wehby were not so personable and charismatic, his professionalism when he is "working" could be intimidating.

Wehby is able to detach himself from the chaos of violence that swirls in such situations based on years of active participation in MMA. In simple terms, the stress of a real attack causes gross motor skills to override fine and complex motions. In the realm of CQB tactics, this means that simple, straightforward methods that rely on gross motor movements are your best bet.

If you cannot grasp the basic mechanics of a technique within a few tries, it's probably not going to work well for you under stress. Simple things are also easier to remember and program as reflex.

### TACTICAL ARTIST

Wehby views himself as a combat or tactical artist. While the majority of his training time now is in Brazilian Jiu-jitsu and MMA, he is constantly dry firing, studying and developing training drills and concepts for firearms-based training. It is his nature to study and train like conflict is imminent—truly a mindset or, better yet, a lifestyle choice. This is all combined



Student being disoriented during setup phase of stress-fire drill.

with a passion for and enjoyment of training and teaching others—a rare commodity for someone proficient in so many disciplines.

It was eye opening to receive instruction from a different perspective compared to a firearm-centric point of view in terms of techniques, methods, and weapons. Most students, including myself, left the Wehby seminar with more questions than answers. But everyone also gained measurable improvements in skill and mindset.

Different, yet rewarding, would summarize the experience. ◎

## SOURCES

### MMA INSTITUTE OF WINCHESTER

(540) 535-9640

[www.mmawinchester.com](http://www.mmawinchester.com)

### ECHO VALLEY TRAINING CENTER

(540) 450-7998

[www.echovalleytrainingcenter.com](http://www.echovalleytrainingcenter.com)



# DRY FIRE [ON] STEROIDS

## UTM CTA Target Shooting Kit

BY EUGENE NIELSEN

**M**ost of us don't get to the range as often as we'd like to or should. Few of us live where we can step outside and shoot. Even when we do get to the range, restrictions often limit our training. And as we all know, shooting is a perishable skill.

It would be nice to have an alternative that gives us the freedom to shoot virtually anywhere we want and whenever we want with the weapon we use for sport, duty or protection. Now we can do precisely that with the Civilian Training Ammunition (CTA) Target Shooting Kit from Ultimate Training Munitions (UTM) Reality Based Training (RBT).

### CTA TARGET SHOOTING KIT

The CTA Target Shooting Kit allows you to shoot virtually wherever and whenever you want without expending a single round of live ammunition. Dry fire can be a valuable training tool, but it is boring and not a replacement for live fire. CTA offers another option, providing realistic training that offers the same feedback as live fire.

CTA has numerous practical applications. It gives new shooters the ability to train in the basics and safety without having to go to live fire immediately. It gives experienced shooters the ability to do some things they can't do on most live-fire ranges, including low-light practice, shooting 360 degrees, shoot-

ing from the ground, and immediate action drills and reloads. Whether novice or pro, CTA can take your training to a new level.

The CTA round is based on the proven UTM RBT ammunition such as the Man Marker Round (MMR) and Target Bullet Round (TBR) that have been used in military and law enforcement training worldwide for over a decade. It employs the same patented core technology as the MMR and TBR, heretofore unavailable to the general public. The MMR and TBR (both used in force-on-force training) are restricted to military, law enforcement agencies, and professional training organizations.

The TBR, being more closely related to the CTA, was designed specifically to eliminate the potential for serious injury or death during live-fire CQB training, as to allow more training options. UTM RBT sought to bring the target shooting benefits of TBR to the civilian market when developing CTA.

The CTA Target Shooting Kit is a complete system consisting of special target ammunition and a fail-safe conversion kit, all designed for the utmost safety, reliability, and maintainability. Normal weapon function, recoil, and cyclic rates are retained. It is the first such system to be specifically designed and engineered for target shooting at home. You are no longer limited to dry fire when off the range.

UTM RBT will be offering target am-

CTA round is based on proven UTM RBT Target Bullet Round (shown in cutaway view), which has been used in military and law enforcement training worldwide for over a decade. Photo: UTM RBT



munition and conversion kits for a variety of popular firearms. We received the .223/5.56mm AR-15/M4 CTA Target Shooting Kit on loan for evaluation.

### WEAPON CONVERSION

As with all UTM RBT conversions, there is no permanent modification of the weapon. The AR-15/M4 conversion requires just a simple exchange of the standard bolt carrier group with the proprietary CTA bolt carrier group. It takes under a minute. The AR-15/M4 conversion is recoil operated (direct blowback) and works in both DI and piston platforms.

The AR-15/M4 Bolt Carrier Group Conversion is engineered with fail-safe measures that prevent the discharge of a standard “live” round. This is achieved



Above: UTM RBT Civilian Target Ammunition is the first technology of its type specifically engineered for target shooting at home.

Left: UTM RBT products are employed by military, law enforcement agencies, and professional training organizations worldwide. Photo: UTM RBT

Below: AR-15/M4 conversion requires a simple exchange of the standard bolt carrier group with the proprietary CTA BCG. It takes under a minute with no permanent modification of the weapon.



with a 3mm offset firing pin design that only works with the rimfire Power Load employed in all UTM RBT ammunition.

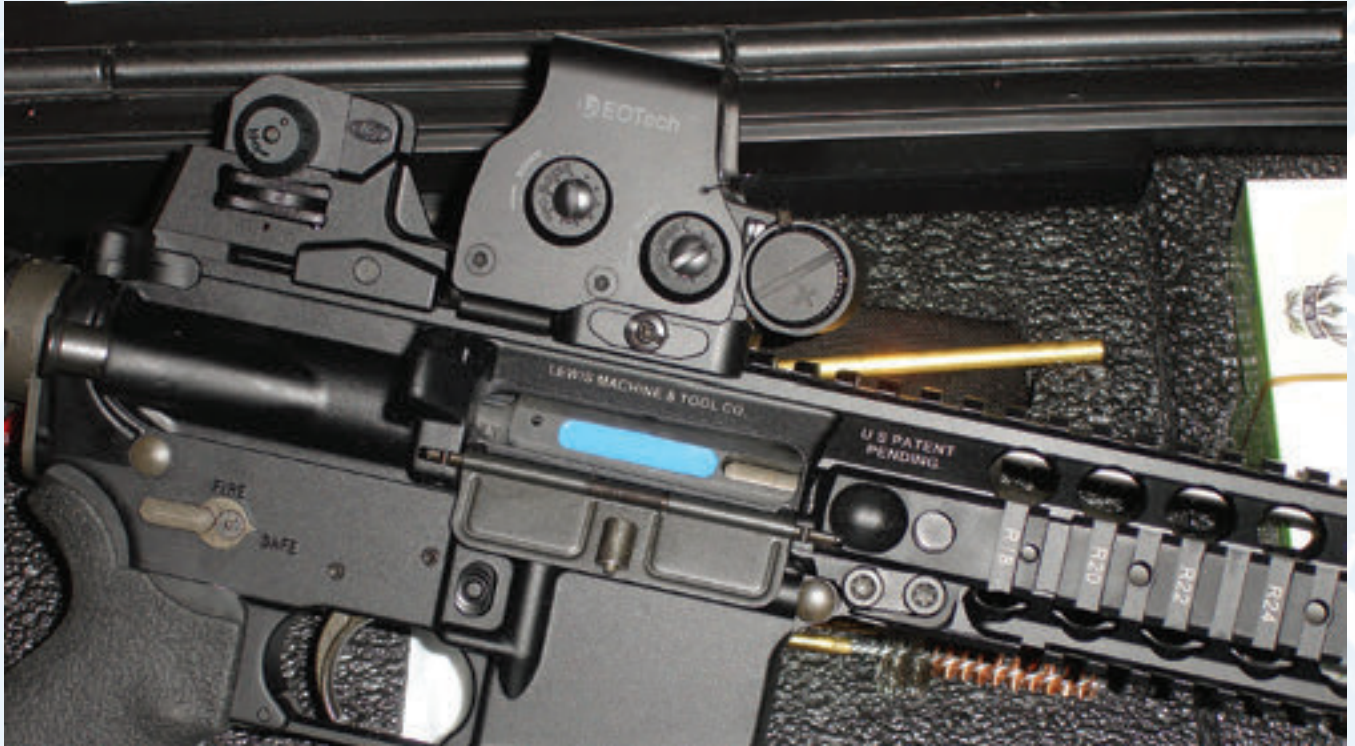
It is impossible for a converted weapon to fire standard ammunition. In the event that a standard .223/5.56mm round is chambered and the trigger pulled, the offset firing pin will strike outside the primer pocket, preventing discharge.

The bolt carrier features a blue indicator to easily differentiate a safe, converted weapon. The conversion is designed so the weapon's dust cover will not close with the bolt carrier conversion installed, keeping the blue indicator always visible.

It should be noted that the AR-15/M4 conversion employs a non-shrouded (semi-auto) bolt carrier, although the







Above: CTA Target Shooting Kit is first to be introduced for AR-15/M4 platform. CTA conversion is designed so weapon's dust cover will not close with bolt carrier conversion installed, keeping blue indicator always visible.

Right: CTA Target Shooting kit comes in a fitted Pelican-style hard case.

Far right: CTA Target Shooting Kit allows you to shoot more often and in more places—even in your own home! Kit comes with everything you need.



UTM RBT bolt carrier conversion features offset firing pin that cannot fire standard ammunition. Conversion firing pin will strike outside the primer pocket of traditional "live" ammunition.

Photo: UTM RBT

bolt carrier is marked M16/M4. It can of course be employed in select-fire weapons, but only in semiautomatic mode.

#### HOW IT WORKS

CTA features a patented proprietary dual primer actuated system and projectile driving band system. The cartridge contains no gunpowder. The isolated primers and expanding aluminum cartridge isolate the large operational energy necessary to cycle the firearm from the small amount of energy required for propelling the projectile. Standard magazines can be used. The round is hearing safe (113 db), non-toxic and lead free, although it is recommended that you shoot in a well-ventilated area. There is virtually no weapon fouling.

The CTA projectile assembly has an

aluminum base covered with a blue plastic dome. It has a mass of 6.6 grains. CTA has an average muzzle velocity of 375 fps, and average muzzle energy is 2.1 foot pounds. This is similar to many Airsoft guns. That being said, CTA is not intended for force-on-force training. It is designed solely for target shooting using an appropriate backstop.

Unlike the UTM RBT Man Marker Round (MMR), which has the marking compound in an open cruciform dome that dissipates some energy when it hits, CTA has a hard plastic projectile tip, which gives it excellent accuracy but does not dissipate energy. It will definitely dent or lodge in drywall from close range.

CTA has a maximum effective range of approximately 50 meters, although the optimal effective range is 30 meters





**UTM RBT will be offering conversion kits for other popular firearms as part of the CTA system, such as this UTM RBT Glock 19 conversion.** Photo: UTM RBT

and closer. Minimum safe distance is 175 meters. CTA has outstanding short-range accuracy. Under ideal conditions, the round is capable of producing 1.18-inch groups at 30 meters. The projectile is somewhat wind sensitive due to its low mass and velocity.

CTA core cartridge technology has over 99% reliability as certified by the U.S. Army's Picatinny Arsenal. During my testing, which consisted of firing 100 rounds (the amount provided by UTM RBT), there were no failures. Functioning was flawless.

When it comes to functioning, the main safety is to be sure to run the ammo on a clean and dry chamber and bore. The projectile is very light and about the only way you can malfunction the system is with bad magazines or a very dirty or lubed bore, which can cause a projectile to get stuck from the oil. This is easy to deal with but completely avoidable if you just run a dry bore snake or patch before you convert the weapon and then run a rod before converting back to live ammunition to ensure it is clear.

Lubricate normally as you would in your bolt carrier group in areas where there is going to be metal-to-metal contact. But when it comes to the chamber and bore, clean and dry is the way to go.

### WHAT YOU GET

The AR-15/M4 CTA Target Shooting Kit comes with everything you need. Included in the kit are a UTM RBT AR-15 Bolt Carrier Group Conversion, two 50-round boxes of ammunition, one five-round Magpul PMAG M3, Cleaning Kit, UTM RBT Target Holder and Trap, two bungee-cord target hangers, three targets, and a detailed UTM RBT Conversion Manual with full color illustrations. It comes in a locking, foam-fitted hard carry case.

The AR-15/M4 CTA Target Shooting Kit has an introductory offer price of \$349.00. CTA .223/5.56mm ammunition is \$29.50 per box of 50 rounds. They may be ordered directly from UTM RBT. The kit is manufactured in the USA at UTM RBT's Long Branch, New Jersey, manufacturing facility. It is available in the contiguous U.S. only. CTA Products do not ship to Alaska, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, New York, Washington D.C., or any APO, FPO or PO boxes. ☺

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## Tactical Takedown!

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The test sample liked standard and mid-weight bullets. Accuracy-wise, the top five loads were:

- Black Hills 60-grain VMAX at .68 inch
- Hornady 60-grain TAP Urban at .73 inch
- Double Tap 55-grain Barnes TSX at .75 inch
- Federal 55-grain Nosler Ballistic Tip at .75 inch
- Hornady 55-grain FMJ at .82 inch

All loads shot under one inch or just a few thousandths larger.

While the one-MOA dot of the EO-Tech did not allow for true precision, I wanted an optic that would fit in one of the outer pockets of the TD's case. I have no doubt that if a magnified optic with a fine cross hair were used, the TD would still place all rounds in an inch or just slightly larger group.

To determine if the barrel would maintain zero after being installed and removed repeatedly, after each ten-round string fired for accuracy, the barrel was allowed to cool, then removed and reinstalled. I observed no change in accuracy.

I had two back-to-back failure-to-feed malfunctions with Hornady 68-grain BTHP using Fusil magazines. Switching to GI mags solved the problem with this load. One 20-round Lancer mag would insert too far into the magazine well using just a gentle push/pull, not allowing rounds to chamber. This magazine was fixed by throwing it on the berm and using it as a target of opportunity.

At the end of the initial evaluation, I had fired 550 rounds, including the rounds needed to zero the EO-Tech.

### TD AT GUNSITE

A week or so before I planned to send the TD back to Ruger, I was invited to attend a writer's seminar at Gunsite sponsored by Simply Rugged Holsters, Ruger and Double Tap ammunition.

Ruger brought their lightweight Commander-type 1911, the SR-556 Takedown, and the Precision Rifle, as all three are relatively new and had not yet been seen by a lot of people. I brought my T&E Takedown in order to put more rounds downrange for a more comprehensive evaluation.

While half of the participants went



to another range to shoot the Precision Rifle, the remainder were given the chance to shoot the TD in 5.56mm and .300 Blackout, both suppressed and non-suppressed.

I used this time to go to the firing line with ten magazines and fire numerous NSRs through the sample TD—300 rounds in about ten minutes using Double Tap 55-grain training ammo. Without allowing the carbine to cool, I proceeded to shoot head shots on three targets from 25 yards, with no apparent change in accuracy.

Before I left, the round count was over 1,000 and the TD still showed good

accuracy. No malfunctions (except as noted above) were experienced.

### CONCLUSIONS

If I have a single gripe with the TD, it's the weight. I hope the engineers at Ruger can find a way to change the quad rail to something lighter like the Key-Mod system. Lightweight in a small package would make it almost perfect.

But even in its present form, the TD makes an ideal choice for aircraft, boats, motor homes, or anywhere space is at a premium. It is a hard-shooting, reliable carbine that is a welcome addition to the Ruger line-up of AR-type rifles. ☉

## SOURCES

### STURM, RUGER & CO., INC.

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# TOPS Team Jackal Survivor



**TOPS Team Jackal Survivor is a superb knife that is up to extreme duty.**

Photo: TOPS Knives

**ONE** of the most recent knives introduced by TOPS Knives is the Team Jackal Survivor. Like the fast, quiet, and efficient hunter it's named after, this knife is made to go the distance.

The Jackal is manufactured from 1095 high carbon steel, which has excellent edge retention and is also easy to re-sharpen in the field. Both of these attributes are important when its user may be in the field for prolonged periods of time.

The Coyote Tan powder coat protects the blade from the elements and reduces reflection. From tip to pommel, the Jackal measures 10¾ inches long with a five-inch blade and is ¼ inch wide at the tang.

The clip-point Bowie-type blade is one of my personal all-time favorite designs. To illustrate just how much I like the clip point, I have carried a Schrade Bear Paw in a belt sheath every day since my son gave it to me for Father's Day in 1978. Likewise, a Spyderco Schempp Bowie has become part of my everyday-carry (EDC) gear.

As a combat knife, the clip point/Bowie design offers good slashing capability and deep penetration. In a non-tactical role, it can be used for everything from simple camp chores to butchering animals. For fine work, the Jackal has substantial jimping on the top of the blade, just ahead of the scales.

Scales (handles) are made from black G10 and feature TOPS Rocky Mountain Tread design, which offers a solid grip in all conditions.

The scales are removable if the full tang needs to be cleaned. TOPS chose to use Phillips-head screws to attach the scales, and I give them major kudos for doing so. A Phillips, or even a small straight screwdriver that will fit in the slots, is almost always available. The same cannot be said for Allen- or Torx-head screws.

The Jackal ships with a Kydex® sheath that is molded perfectly to the shape of the knife. It secures in place with a positive click and withdraws easily. But unless you want to remove the knife, no amount of shaking will dislodge it.



Spring steel clip can be rotated 180 degrees.



On the back of the sheath is a spring steel clip that is designed to rotate 180 degrees, allowing you to carry the Jackal in a variety of positions. The clip is somewhat hard to move and won't swivel, ensuring it will stay in the position selected by the user.

I didn't have any perfectly good rope I wanted to cut into unusable lengths, but I used the Team Jackal Survivor almost exclusively for over a week. I cut nylon webbing, cardboard boxes, and Textaline® (used in industrial awnings and outdoor furniture) remnants. I also cut beef and potatoes while preparing a stew.

The Jackal maintained a good edge for most of the week. When it finally became somewhat dull, I was able to restore it to its original edge—or better—very quickly using my Spyderco Sharpmaker.

The Team Jackal Survivor is too large to become part of my EDC gear, but I can find room for it on my battle belt. Suggested retail price is \$175.00. ©



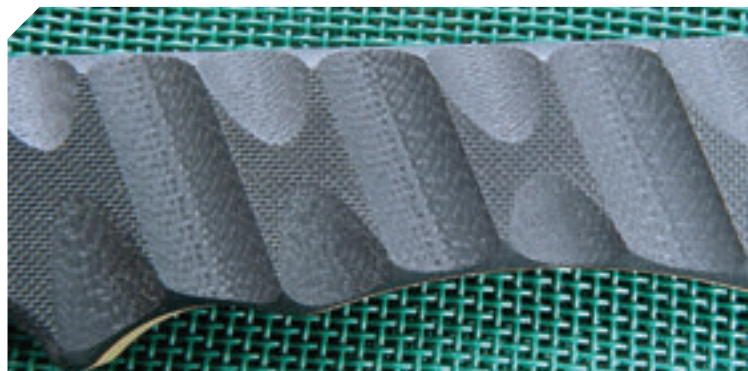
Kydex sheath holds Jackal securely.



For fine work, Jackal has jimping on the top of the blade.



Clip point/Bowie-type blade offers good slashing capability and penetration.



TOPS Rocky Mountain Tread design gives a solid grip in all conditions.

Author prefers Bowie-type blades. Top to bottom: TOPS Team Jackal Survivor, Schrade Bear Paw, and Spyderco Schempp Bowie.



## SOURCES

### TOPS KNIVES

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### SCHRADE KNIVES

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### SPYDERCO

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## Trijicon HD Sights

**WE** all have our likes and dislikes. They range from taste in food and drink to choice in firearms and their accoutrements. Sights are no different. There are many different types of sights and all of them have their fans and detractors, some of whom have questionable experience but are more than willing to offer their fervent vigor for and against.

I have experimented with many different sight setups over the years. I have tried the various notch-and-post offerings, three-dot night sights, front night sight only, gold bead, black only, etc. I have even tried the express style in various forms. I have put a fair number of rounds downrange with my handguns equipped with different sights under the stress of a timer.

For me, the best combination of accuracy and speed was with a Trijicon tritium front combined with a 10-8 Performance rear. But this setup wasn't without its drawbacks. The white ring would get dirty, and the black sight would wash out at distance against a dark target or in waning light. I had a hard time finding the rear sight at night because it was without tritium, but I loved the U-shaped notch.

Recently I began looking at sights again. I was mostly after a front only when I came across the newest offering from Trijicon, which calls them HD Sights, or High Definition. After looking at them on Trijicon's website, I was intrigued enough to order a set for both my G17 and M&P9F.

The first thing I noticed is the front sight. And why not—the front sight is what we're supposed to focus on. It is larger

than most, with a width of 0.144 inch and a height of 0.215 inch. The face of the sight is not serrated and is at a 100-degree angle to put as much light on the front as possible. The tritium dot has a colored ring around it.

The ring is photoluminescent paint, which absorbs natural and artificial light then discharges it. Trijicon offers both an orange and a yellow ring. The yellow will discharge light for a longer period, but for me the orange stands out better, like a train conductor in a safety vest on the end of my gun.

Trijicon adds a protectant clear coat to the sight, effectively sealing the paint in. Other companies that offer similar sights sometimes omit this.

The front sight isn't the only different thing. The rear sight boasts as many features unique to it as the front. It starts with a wide U-notch. Earlier I mentioned my affinity for the U-notch on the 10-8 rear. The HD rear sight has a similar U-shaped notch but much wider, at 0.169 inch. I can acquire the front sight faster with the U-notch over a flat notch.

The face of the rear sight is horizontally serrated at 50 LPI and angled at roughly 80 degrees. This cuts glare on the rear sight, which can distract the shooter from the front sight, to an absolute minimum.

Like other Trijicon sights, there are a pair of tritium vials, one on either side of the notch. Instead of the white rubber rings common to Trijicon, the rings are black, the idea being that in the daytime, the rear sight looks virtually all black, but



Black rings, U-notch, and serrations of the Trijicon HDs offer a plain black rear sight during daylight, but strong green vials glow at night. I dabbed a felt marker on the vials to "dim" the rear tritium output.



With blaze orange photoluminescent paint sealed into the front sight, the Trijicon HD front picks up clean and fast.





**Even with the light behind this CSAT target, the Trijicon HD front still shows up vibrantly.**



**Even with a no-snag profile, Trijicon HD sights can still be used to manipulate the firearm one handed in the event of injury.**

in transitional lighting or darkness, the vials glow green.

Trijicon saw fit to give these sights what amounts to a carry bevel. The sides and tops are rounded to reduce snagging. That said, the shape of the rear sight is still very much conducive to one-handed manipulation. I was able to use the seams of my pockets, belt, boots, car door, steering wheel, and other surfaces to rack the slide.

I wanted to put these sights through their paces. Fortunately the gentlemen from Hardwired Tactical Shooting live in my area, and I was able to meet Wayne Dobbs at a local pistol range to do some shooting and comparisons. I handed Wayne my M&P9F and G17, and he immediately liked the front sight but wasn't sure about the rear, as he doesn't care for tritium on the rear sight. He started out going from the ready position to firing a single shot at seven meters.

We moved back to 15 meters and he began drawing from the holster, firing a single round. Wayne consistently achieved times better than his normal times and commented positively on how fast the front sight is to acquire and how much it stands out.

For one reason or another, there is some concern with the accuracy potential of these sights. I have heard folks complain that the front sight is too wide and the overall sight set-up too big. I say hogwash on both counts.

These sights are perfectly capable up close and at distance. At 25 meters, Wayne, the other shooters, and I had no problems placing rounds on target and in a reasonable timeframe.

I'd like to see Trijicon do a few things differently with the HD line of sights. First is the rear tritium. While the black rings are very nice and a positive step, the rear tritium is still as bright as the front.

Trijicon brags about the sapphire clear lenses of their product, as well they should, but I don't understand why we can't have rear sights that are dimmer than the front, thus giving contrast. I know, I can use a Sharpie, but why should I have to? I want night sights on the rear that are just a bit dimmer. I'd like to see rear tritium offered with a tint.

Secondly, several of the shooters involved in this evaluation simply prefer a plain black sight. With suggested retail on Trijicon HDs being between \$157 and \$185, it would obviously make the price lower, but it would also offer these sights to an audience that deems rear tritium superfluous. They don't want to pay for something they don't need or want.

With that said, I like these sights—a lot. I will eventually put them on my other carry pistols. For me, the Trijicon HDs are fast, accurate, durable, and definitely worth a look if you're in the market for new sights. ☺

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### TRIJICON, INC.

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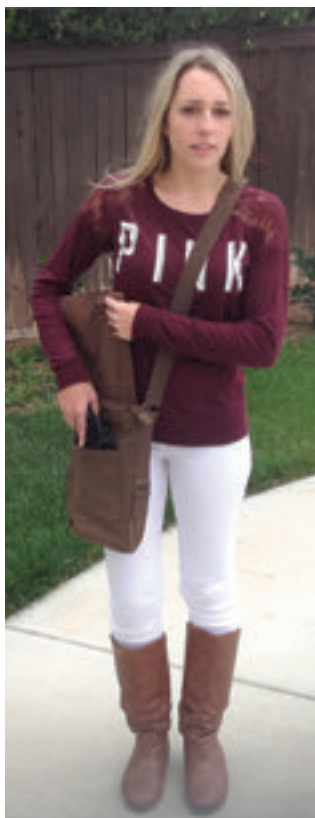
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### XD Mod. 2 Sub-Compact Bluegun

Blueguns has introduced the Springfield Armory XD Mod. 2 Sub-Compact .45-caliber training pistol replica from Ring's Manufacturing. It is molded from solid blue polyurethane to differentiate it from a live weapon. Blueguns allow officers to train in realistic tactical scenarios without the need to use their duty firearms. They also protect live weapons from accidental damage during training exercises and provide a safe training aid. Blueguns are realistic 1:1 replicas of actual firearms in a range of popular handguns, sub-machine guns, lights, knives, pepper sprays, and radios. All Blueguns are 100% manufactured in the USA.



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### SureFire WristLight

SureFire, manufacturer of premium illumination tools and tactical products, has introduced the 2211X WristLight. The robust, polymer-bodied 2211X is the lightest weight, most affordable member of SureFire's ground-breaking WristLight family. Developed over years with input from active-duty police officers and other hardcore users, this compact, lightweight wrist-worn light boasts a proprietary reflector that shapes the light from its virtually indestructible LED into a wide, smooth MaxVision Beam™—ideal for closer-range tasks—at three useful levels: 300, 60, and 15 lumens. And because it's strapped to



your wrist, the 2211X is always ready for law enforcement and countless everyday-carry applications—and it won't ever get dropped or left behind when you need it most.

The WristLight is constructed from a durable, lightweight polymer that resists impact. An adjustable nylon wristband keeps the light securely and comfortably strapped to your wrist. Powered by a single 123A lithium battery, it can provide up to 13 hours of useful illumination. Suggested retail price is \$169.

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## TOPS Knives Kodiak JAC 2

For many people who live in places like Alaska and Idaho, hunting isn't a sport—it's a way of life and in some cases a necessity. The Kodiak JAC was designed with input from professionals who have spent years hunting, trapping, fishing, skinning, and processing the meat they consume instead of buying it from grocery stores. The TOPS Knives Kodiak JAC 2 is a dream knife for hunters, trappers, and outdoorsmen. Every aspect of the design serves a purpose. The wide blade with lots of belly keeps the tip from puncturing an animal, while still providing excellent cutting capability. The handle and overall shape of the blade facilitate multiple hand positions, making it more versatile. The extended tang is great for scraping the hide in harder-to-reach places where the blade edge might dull faster.



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## BLACKHAWK! SERPA Holsters

BLACKHAWK!® introduces four new SERPA® Holsters, including one for the new Glock 43 and three models to accommodate popular military and law enforcement duty pistols. BLACKHAWK! built these new holster models to meet the growing demand for carry options for slim-framed personal-protection pistols and additional full-size duty pistols. In addition to the Glock 43, a SERPA model is also available for the FNH FNS 9/40, SIG Sauer P250/P320, full-size and compact pistols chambered in 9mm/.40 S&W/.45 ACP/.357 Magnum.

The other new SERPA holster will accommodate the CZ 75/75B/75 SP-01 Shadow/85B in 9mm/.40 S&W and the EAA Witness TA 95 in .45 ACP.

Featuring two levels of retention, the SERPA CQC Concealment Holster delivers unmatched speed and reliability. The SERPA Auto Lock Release reinforces a full master grip that allows users to draw the weapon normally, with the index finger sliding from the holster body to the weapon frame in one single movement. Upon re-holstering the firearm, the Auto Lock immediately engages the trigger guard with an audible click that won't let go until released.



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## Inconvenience Store

On a hot August night, a robber with a pistol in his hand approached the cashier in a Rockdale County, Georgia convenience store and demanded money. As the clerk handed over the till in the face of the drawn gun, the robber noticed another store employee watching.

The holdup man attempted to conceal his firearm and began making for the exit when the clerk at the register produced his own pistol from a shoulder holster and opened fire. The robber fled, and the convenience store employees called 911.

Searching the area for the suspect, police determined that money found in the area had been dropped by the fleeing criminal.

SOURCE: *The Rockdale Citizen*, Conyers, Georgia, 8/18/15

## Trouble On His Doorstep

Attacked in front of his own house as he was returning home from a trip abroad this August, a Lorain, Ohio man struggled with his attacker at the threshold. As the fight between the two men spilled into the house, the homeowner was able to reach a handgun he kept near his front door and fired on his assailant, inflicting fatal wounds.

Police investigating the scene stated the deceased attacker had items on him that indicate he had been trying to force entry into the house before he was surprised by the homeowner's return, and that the case appears to be one of self-defense.

SOURCE: Cleveland.com (*The Plain Dealer*), Cleveland, Ohio, 8/12/15

## Not His First Rodeo

A 22-year-old male entered a Terrell, Texas convenience store and looked around, asking if there was a restroom. Seeing only the elderly woman behind the counter, he stepped outside briefly and re-entered the store wearing a ski mask and displaying a pistol. He drew his weapon and demanded money before noticing that the woman's 75-year-old husband was also in the store.

"I told him to go ahead," said the septuagenarian store owner to reporters later. He described how, when the robber turned away from him, he drew his own pistol and fired once, hitting the robber in the buttocks and sending him fleeing. The owner then showed a yellowed newspaper clipping that reported how he'd shot a previous armed robber "six or seven times" some 20 years earlier. The robber was later captured by police.

SOURCE: *The Terrell Tribune*, Terrell, Texas, 8/19/15

## "Don't Make Me Use This"

Late on an August night in Daytona Beach, Florida, a man and woman heard the man's car start up suddenly. The man yanked the passenger door of his vehicle open to discover a carjacker in the driver's seat. "Don't make me use this!" the carjacker growled and gestured as though he had a weapon. At that point, the man's girlfriend yanked the driver's door open and began raining punches on the carjacker, who fell out of the open door.

As the fight between the two continued, the car's owner retrieved his own pistol from inside it and fired on the carjacker, who fled. He was tracked down by the police using bloodhounds. Police told reporters that the carjacking suspect had three prior felony convictions.

SOURCE: WKMG-TV, Orlando, Florida, 8/13/15 ©



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## Cold Weather Training

**IT'S** mid-winter in North America—and you're miserable.

Frigid temperatures, rain, sleet and snow have combined to cast doubts in your mind as to whether you could, if required, perform at a satisfactory level of competence in a gunfight.

Since Rule Number One is to always look cool, that's no problem, as you're currently so cool your frozen blue skin is already color-matched to that idiotic ear implant that appears to have universally replaced the cell phone. What is a problem, however, is being able to instantly access a pistol from underneath mounds of clothing and then, once accessed, to maintain control of the weapon with wet, numbed hands.

As one more piece of evidence that He does, indeed, have a sense of humor, the Good Lord has seen fit to reverse the functioning of your body organs relative to the change of seasons. In summer your heart was on fire, fueled by a passion for life. Now the only things burning are your ears and fingertips. Six months ago your feet enabled you to seemingly out-accelerate a Ferrari. Along comes winter, and apparently the only organ capable of running is your nose. *C'est la vie.*

Unfortunately, bad people don't hibernate during the winter months, so if you're serious about training for a potential conflict, you'd better include cold-weather scenarios in your practice regimen. And taking for granted that no training can ever assure success in battle, there is one guarantee: you can't simulate that you're cold when you physically aren't cold.

Prancing around on the training range dressed like Sasquatch when spring flowers are blooming proves only one thing—you remembered where you stowed the previous winter's clothes and gear. It in no way represents having to operate in Icelandic conditions, with attendant frozen paws, precarious balance on icy road surfaces, loss of alacrity because you're swathed in clothing like an Eskimo mummy, and let's not forget the dulling of senses that cold and discomfort tend to breed.

If you're hot, you can always hydrate or rent a herd of concubines to fan you with ostrich feathers, but once the cold permeates your body, you're one digit short of a full zip code. Yes, I know they sent you to Norway for three months of cold weather training, but the Russians also used to fling their trainee paratroopers into snow banks from low-flying aircraft—without parachutes.

Since safety in training is paramount, cold weather training is usually suspended when it becomes too dangerous due to slippery footing, frozen gun hands or the approach of hypothermia—but there's no time-out in a war zone. While attempting to replicate, training isn't a real battlefield and never will be—and “acceptable training losses,” like good manners and honesty, went out the window a long time ago.

So how do you prepare for a Frigid Fight situation?

First you practice in decent weather, fully dressed in your foul-weather gear, including the gloves you'd be wearing. The latter are critical to gaining proficiency with the loading, ma-

nipulation, checking, reloading and malfunction clearances of your carry pistol(s). Use dummy replicas of your weapons until proficient, or you're an accident waiting to happen.

Once you've achieved a quick, positive drawstroke/presentation of the pistol onto target from beneath the cold/wet weather anorak, coat, sweater or whatever, you'll discover a couple of interesting things:

First, unless you're packing a World War II Nambu (which could often be fired merely by tightening the firing grip anyway), your gloved index finger no longer fits inside the trigger guard. Oops. That neat “accurizing” long trigger you fitted last summer has now rendered the pistol about as useful as a milk pail under a bull.

You could cut off the trigger-finger portion of the glove. That usually works, and it also looks cool (see Rule One). Hope you aren't pinned down for two hours behind a dumpster, or you'd better have a warm place to insert your trigger finger until needed. (A suggestion will be cheerfully supplied upon request.) With a bit of luck, you won't have to shoot weak-handed, so the other glove doesn't need to be modified. Apparently that situation arises only in the warm weather months.

Or you could practice using your teeth to remove the required glove from your hand. (If you have false teeth, please see the section on how to keep your trigger finger warm.)

Another enlightenment you discover with initial practice is that zippers bind more in winter than in summer. Lube them with candle wax, MD Labs XF7 lubricant, or better yet, use a double pull-tab zipper. This enables you to leave the lower section of a coat “snapped” while the upper portion is zippered, giving quick access to a belt holster.

More joy is discovered—especially in saltwater conditions such as coastal areas—when you find the one-way snap on your holster's thumb snap is now a zero-way snap. They often rust inside and don't unsnap at the most inopportune times. Keep them lubed!

The list of items affected by cold weather, too long to itemize here, also includes moisture absorption into cartridge primer pockets, resulting in unsatisfactory primer/powder ignition. Seal them with nail polish. Finally, after you've discovered all the little equipment joys that can get you killed—like goggles that fog the first time you take a breath—then, and only then, should you start practicing live fire and manipulation exercises with a loaded, operational weapon.

Unquestionably, fighting and training in cold weather are more difficult, both mentally and physically, than in fair weather. But if you're serious, as opposed to paranoid, you either train or you don't—there is no gray area.

Don't worry about it. Unless you've lived the life of a saint or are deeply religious, if you get taken out in winter, you're probably headed for a place where the last thing you'll have to worry about is getting cold. ☺

*[This column first appeared in the December 2006 issue of S.W.A.T.]*



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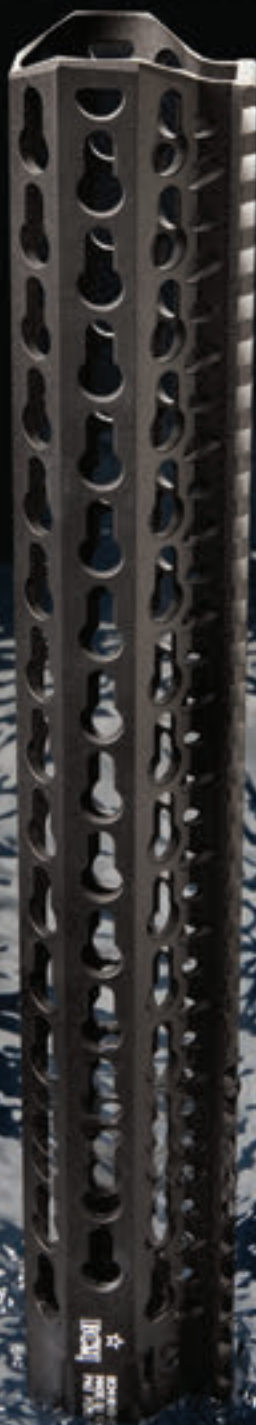
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