

An update on using 7.62mm NATO .308 Win and Ammunition

by Gus Fisher

This article is primarily aimed at using this ammo in M1 and M14/M1A rifles. This won't be a typical one-versus-the-other cartridge debate. The goal is to give the GCA membership info they can use, including what may be new information to some.

For safety reasons, we have to begin by saying not all .308 Win ammo is safe to use in an M1 Rifle. Some of the commonly available .308 Win ammo exceeds the 50,000 psi maximum chamber pressure for the M1. If you are interested in using those loads, then a device like the Schuster Adjustable Gas Cylinder Lock Screw must be used to keep the pressure at safe levels. However, since the GCA has no control of the proper use of that system, that is all that will be said.

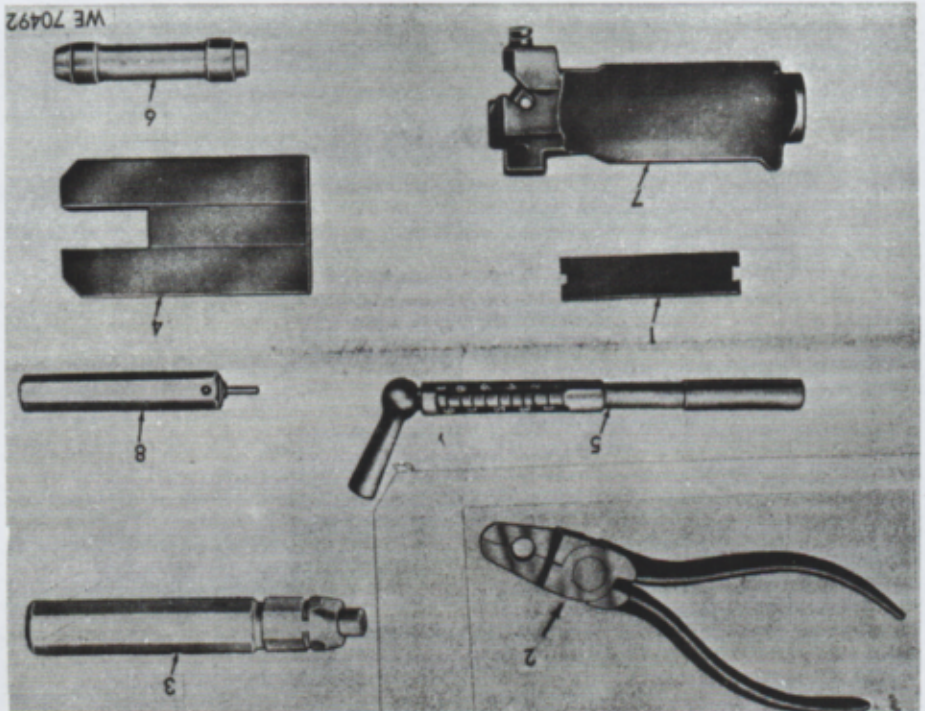
Since there is so little difference in the outside dimensions of both cartridge cases, it used to be said that when using U.S. manufactured NATO spec. 7.62mm ammo ONLY, both cartridges could be safely used in the same chamber in an M1 or M14/M1A rifle. Well folks, that was not entirely true even back then because some 7.62 GI Ammo like M60 HPT and

M993 AP far exceed safe chamber pressure limits for these rifles. I am not trying to nitpick earlier authors, as those types of 7.62mm USGI Ammo were/are not intended for nor readily available on the civilian market. Still, I believe it would be a disservice to the GCA membership if I didn't mention them, in case a member runs across such ammo.

Further, there are some newer types of U.S. GI ammo that were developed after earlier articles were written that are either NOT safe to use in M1 or M14/A1 Rifles or won't work properly in many of them. Back in the mid 1990's, the Weapons Training Battalion aboard Marine Corps Base Quantico, VA was chosen by Lake City Arsenal to test the then new M118 LR (Long Range) ammo under development. This was because the Rifle Team Equipment Repair Shop had originally developed the M40A1 bolt action sniper rifle and had long experience with the Scout Sniper Instructors who taught how to use it so effectively. We were issued all sorts of precision pressure test equipment to insure valid test results of the ammo. To make a long story shorter, the original ammo was downright SCARY accurate in the bolt action M40A1 at 1,000 yards, but was WAY TOO HOT for USGI M14 rifles. Lake City wisely condemned that ammo and changed the specs on the M118 LR so it could be used safely in both M14 and GI bolt action Sniper Rifles. NONE of that earlier developmental M118 LR ammo was ever supposed to be released, but mistakes do happen. Should any member run across some of it, it is not safe to use in the M1 or M14/M1A.

What some GCA members may not know is the M118 LR that was approved and successfully issued and used for some two decades in M14 and GI Bolt Action Sniper Rifles may not work properly in all chambers cut for .308 Win. headspace. More on that later. Before discussing chamber headspace and since this IS a GCA Journal article, I hope you will pardon a short but necessary side trip. There probably are some out there who don't know that many brand new .308 Win barrels made for the M1 often do NOT have the correct size gas port for proper function with .308 Win or 7.62 NATO.

General and Direct maintenance tool set.



Flash suppressor alignment tool.

