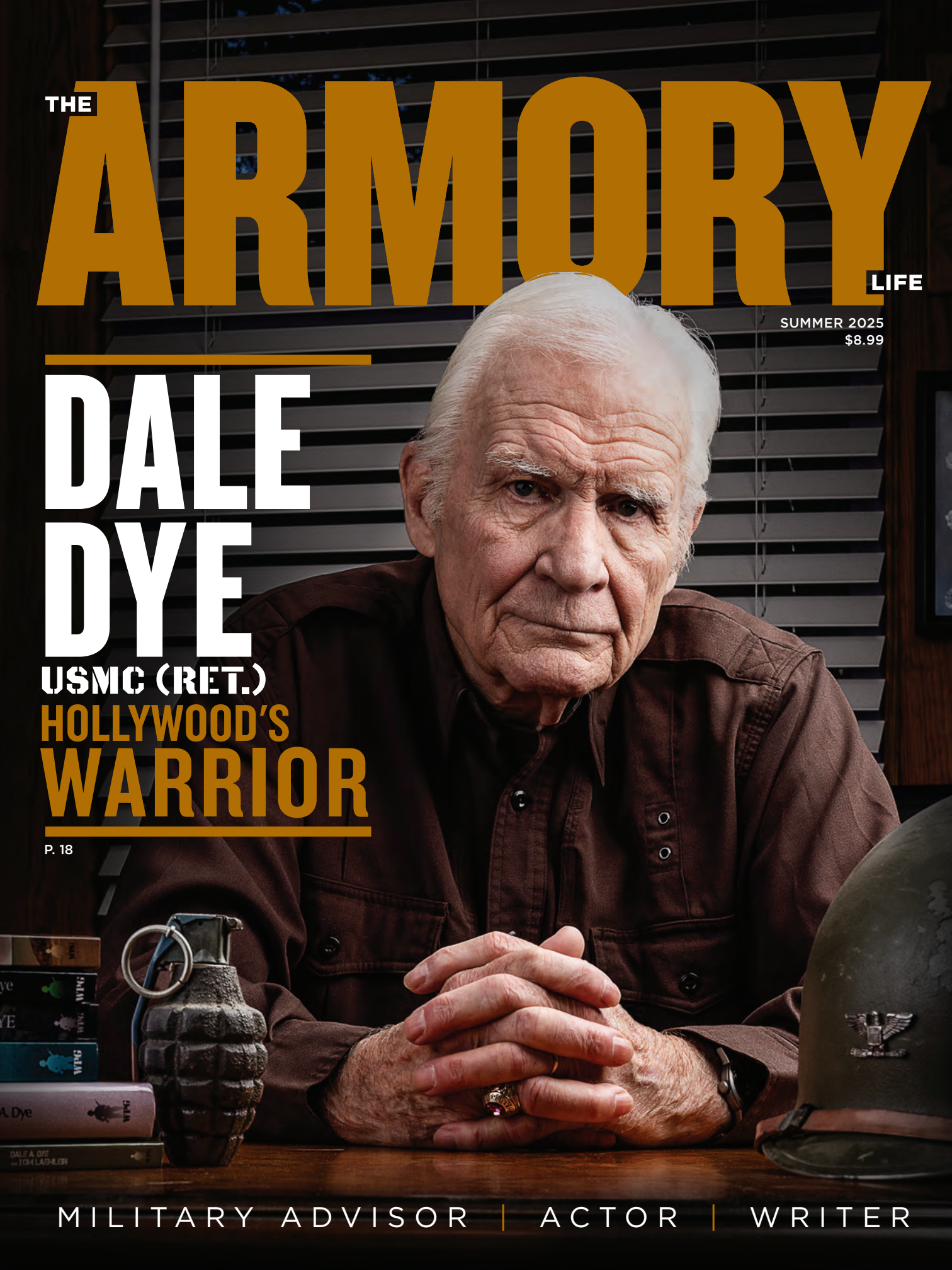

THE ARMORY LIFE
SUMMER 2025
$8.99
DALE DYE
USMC (RET.)
HOLLYWOOD'S WARRIOR
P. 18
MILITARY ADVISOR | ACTOR | WRITER




SPRINGFIELD ARMORY®

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY®

# KUNA™




The all-new Kuna™ pistol from Springfield Armory® is a PDW built to deliver exceptional performance in a portable package. Featuring a roller-delayed operating system and precision manufactured for optimal fit and function, the Kuna is chambered in 9MM with 30-round magazines. The small profile, nimble handling, and prolific capacity make it a fierce personal defense platform. The Kuna from Springfield Armory – ready to roll.

**SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM**

THE ARMORY LIFE

SUMMER 2025


**EDITOR'S NOTE** 6
BY MIKE HUMPHRIES

***THE ARMORY LIFE* VAULT** 8

**SMALL WONDER** 10
The EDC-ready 1911 DS Prodigy Compact 9mm pistols in 3.5" and 4.25" offer potent yet packable concealed carry performance.
BY JEREMY TREMP

**INTERVIEW: DALE DYE** 18
Our exclusive interview with "Hollywood's Warrior," renowned military advisor, actor and writer Capt. Dale Dye, USMC (Ret.).
BY TOM LAEMLEIN

**UNDER CONTROL** 26
The polymer-framed Echelon 4.5F Comp 9mm pistol delivers a nuanced balance of performance and power for the shooter.
BY JEREMY TREMP

**TAILOR-MADE** 34
Based on a classic design, does the powerful and portable Springfield Armory M1A Scout Squad in .308 check all the boxes?
BY JOE KURTENBACH

**EDC ENDURANCE** 40
Streamlight's multi-fuel TLR-7 X Sub rechargeable weapon light delivers unstoppable 500-lumen illumination for your concealed carry Hellcat-series pistol.
BY RICHARD JOHNSON

**ASCENDANT ICON** 46
The new optics-ready TRP AOS pistols — available in either 9mm or .45 — take this revered 1911 design into new territory.
BY JUSTIN OPINION

**WELL-SUITED** 52
The Sharps Bros. aluminum grip module gives shooters an appealing new option for the modular and adaptable Echelon pistol.
BY SCOTT CONDITT













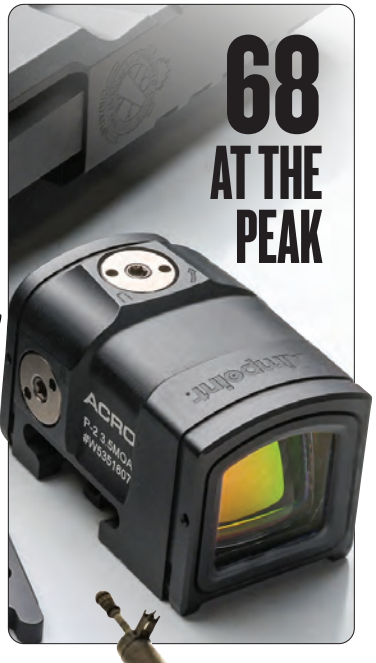






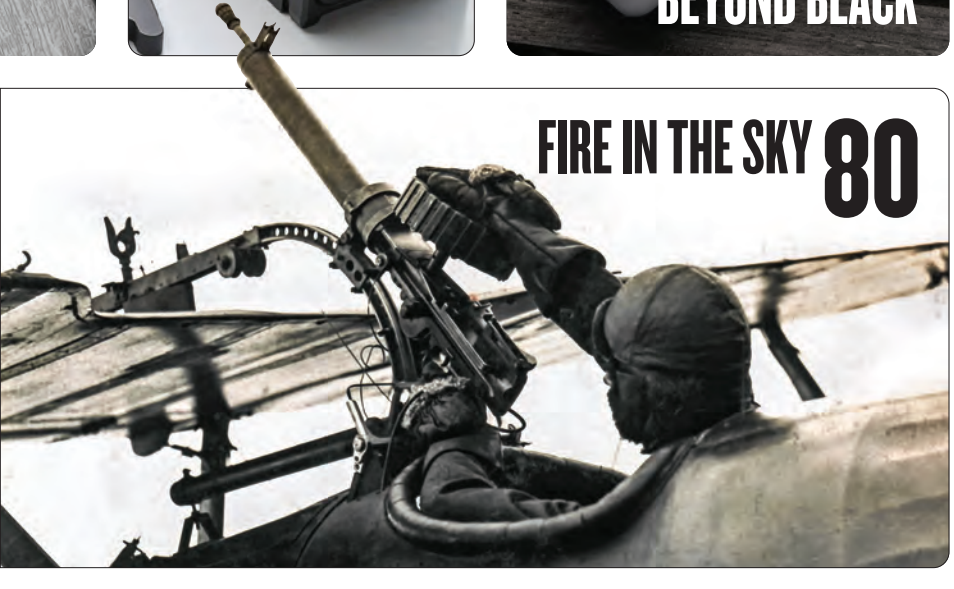













**CLEARING THE AIR** 60
Optics-ready doppelgangers of their centerfire siblings, the $CO_2$-powered Hellcat Pro blowback air pistols offer benefits both on and off the range.
BY CLAYTON WALKER

**AT THE PEAK** 68
Aimpoint's rugged and reliable closed-emitter ACRO P-2 electronic optic is designed to maximize downrange performance.
BY ROBERT SADOWSKI

**BEYOND BLACK** 74
The Tactical Gray and Coyote Brown finish options for the SA-35 add new dimensions to this popular family of 9mm pistols.
BY JUSTIN OPINION

**FIRE IN THE SKY** 80
High above the trenches of World War I, the advanced Lewis machine gun helped revolutionize aerial warfare.
BY TOM LAEMLEIN

**RACING FORWARD** 90
Tuning the capable Echelon 4.5F for competition with the help of some top-tier Springer Precision custom parts.
BY YAMIL SUED

**NEW PRODUCTS** 96

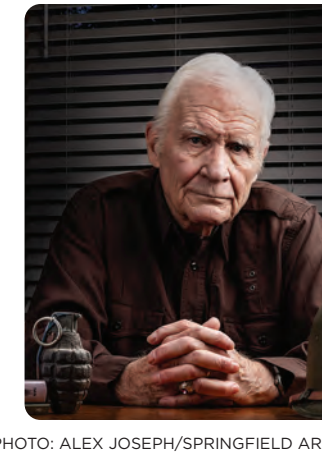


PHOTO: ALEX JOSEPH/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

***The Armory Life*** **(ISSN# 2831-3283)** Vol. 5, No. 2 Published 4 issues per year Spring (April, May June), Summer (July, August, September), Fall (October, November, December) and Winter (January, February, March) by Outdoor Sportsman Group® 1040 6th Ave., 17th Floor, New York, NY 10018. Frequency is subject to change without notice. Periodical postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address change (Form 3579) to The Armory Life, P.O. Box 37539, Boone, Iowa 50037-0539.

THE ARMORY LIFE
An Outdoor Sportsman Group® publication

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY®

**OWNER & CEO**
Dennis Reese

**PRESIDENT**
Stephen McKelvain

**CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**
Peter Eckberg

**MARKETING**

**VP, MARKETING**
Stephen Kramer

**DIRECTOR OF MARKETING**
Alex Joseph

**MEDIA RELATIONS MANAGER**
Mike Humphries

**DIGITAL BRAND MANAGER**
Chad Kimmer

**PRINT & GRAPHICS MANAGER**
Jeremy Noder

**EXECUTIVE PUBLISHER**
Dennis Reese

**VP, SHOOTING GROUP PUBLISHER**
Chris Agnes

**EDITORIAL**

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**
Mike Humphries

**EDITORS**
Eric R. Poole, Jack Oller

**MANAGING EDITOR**
Richard Johnson

**COPY EDITOR**
Lisa Baumgardner

**ART DIRECTORS**
Michael Ulrich, Jeremy Noder

**STAFF PHOTOGRAPHERS**
Jake Miller, Carson McDaniel

**CONTRIBUTORS**

Scott Conditt, Richard Johnson, Joe Kurtenbach, Tom Laemlein, Justin Opinion, Robert Sadowski, Yamil Sued, Jeremy Tremp, Clayton Walker

**ENDEMIC AD SALES**

**SVP, ENDEMIC SALES**
Michael Savino
mike.savino@outdoorsg.com

**NATIONAL ENDEMIC SALES**
Jim McConville (440) 791-7017

**WESTERN REGION**
Hutch Looney hutch@hlooney.com

**EASTERN REGION**
Pat Bentzel (717) 695-8095

**NATIONAL AD SALES**

**SENIOR DIRECTOR, NON-ENDEMIC SALES**
Kevin Donley
kevin.donley@outdoorsg.com

**NATIONAL ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE**
Carl Benson
carl.benson@outdoorsg.com

**DIRECT RESPONSE ADVERTISING/NON-ENDEMIC**
Anthony Smyth (914) 409-4202

OUTDOOR SPORTSMAN GROUP® INTEGRATED MEDIA

**PRESIDENT & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**
Mike Carney

**EVP, OPERATIONS**
Derek Sevcik

**SVP, REVENUE**
Pat Hogan

**VP, CONSUMER MARKETING**
Peter Watt

**SENIOR DIRECTOR, MANUFACTURING & TECHNOLOGY**
Kyle Morgan

**SENIOR DIRECTOR, PRODUCTION**
Connie Mendoza

**DIRECTOR, DIGITAL EDITORIAL**
Darren Choate

**DIRECTOR, SOCIAL MEDIA**
James Clark

**Customer Service contact**: CS@Springfield-Armory.com, (800) 680-6866

***The Armory Life*™, Springfield Armory® and all Springfield Armory products are the property of Springfield, Inc.**

ARMORY® and ⌑ are registered trademarks of Springfield Armory® in the United States.

Some advertisements in this magazine may concern products that are not legally for sale to California residents or residents in other jurisdictions.

Printed in the U.S.A.

The Publisher and authors make no representations or warranties regarding the accuracy, completeness, and timeliness of the information contained in this publication. Any reliance or use of the information is solely at your own risk, and the authors and Publisher disclaim any and all liability relating thereto. Any prices given in this issue were suggested prices at the press time and are subject to change.

Copyright 2025 by Outdoor Sportsman Group®.

All Rights Reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced without written permission.

DEAD AIR
silencers

**DEAD AIR SILENCERS // NO QUARTER**

DEADAIRSILENCERS.COM

# SANDMAN X




The Sandman X is the pinnacle of Dead Air's unwavering commitment to performance and an evolution to the venerable Sandman line. The Sandman X incorporates decades of research to give users the most pleasurable shooting experience possible by optimizing sound, balancing backpressure, and eliminating flash to increase performance for semi-automatic and bolt action rifles alike.

TRISKELION

ADDITIVE

HUB COMPATIBLE

FULL AUTO

FLASH SUPPRESSION

COMPACT




# EDITOR'S NOTE

MIKE HUMPHRIES

**WE'RE PROUD** to present the Summer 2025 issue of *The Armory Life* print magazine. This issue is packed with great content, from our cover story interview with Capt. Dale Dye, USMC (Ret.) to in-depth product reviews and much more.

Renowned military advisor to Hollywood, Dale Dye has brought unyielding authenticity to military-themed films and television shows throughout his long career — both behind and in front of the camera. In addition, he's a published author as well as a valued contributor to *The Armory Life*. Turn to page 18 to learn more about his fascinating journey from the battlefields of Vietnam to the silver screen.

Looking for a modern adaptation of the proven 1911, but with increased capacity and chambered in 9mm? Also, do you want it designed for EDC? Then be sure to check out our full review of the two new 1911 DS Prodigy Compact pistols. Offered in 3.5" and 4.25" variants, these 15+1-capacity pistols are ideal CCW options. Turn to page 10 for the full review.

As long-time readers surely know, we love historical pieces here at *The Armory Life*. In this issue, we have a lavishly illustrated piece by Tom Laemlein covering the history of the Lewis gun's use in aerial warfare above the trenches of World War I. Be sure to read "Fire In The Sky", starting on page 80.

Rounding out the issue are articles on the latest and greatest Springfield Armory firearms as well as exciting new accessories and gear. Read on about the Echelon 4.5F Comp, the M1A Scout Squad and the newest SA-35 variants. In addition, we have articles on the Sharps Bros. Echelon aluminum grip module, Aimpoint's ACRO P-2, the Streamlight TLR-7 X Sub and much more.

As always, I'm very interested in hearing your thoughts about *The Armory Life*. Feel free to contact me at support@thearmorylife.com, and let me know what you think about the content in the magazine and on the website.

So, welcome to the Summer 2025 issue of *The Armory Life* quarterly magazine. Flip through its pages, read some articles, scan some QR codes, visit the website and enjoy. And be sure to keep an eye out for future issues as well!

**VISIT THEARMORYLIFE.COM**

800-338-3220 | HORNADY.COM

# WHEN **TROUBLE** COMES CALLING

## CRITICAL DEFENSE® ANSWERS

The Critical Defense® line of ammunition puts personal protection and concealed carry confidence in the palm of your hand.

The Flex Tip® of the FTX® bullet keeps the nose cavity clear when passing through heavy clothing, and low-flash propellants won't leave you blind when facing an intruder.




Scan for more info and videos

***Critical Defense® — Your Best Defense for Personal Protection.***

THE ARMORY LIFE

# VAULT

**WELCOME** to *The Armory Life* Vault, a portal to expanded digital content from TheArmoryLife.com. Scan the QR codes to find out more about each!



## M1A VS. BEAR



IMAGE: DVIDS. DOES NOT IMPLY OR CONSTITUTE U.S. DOD ENDORSEMENT.





## ARE CUSTOM GUNS A WASTE?





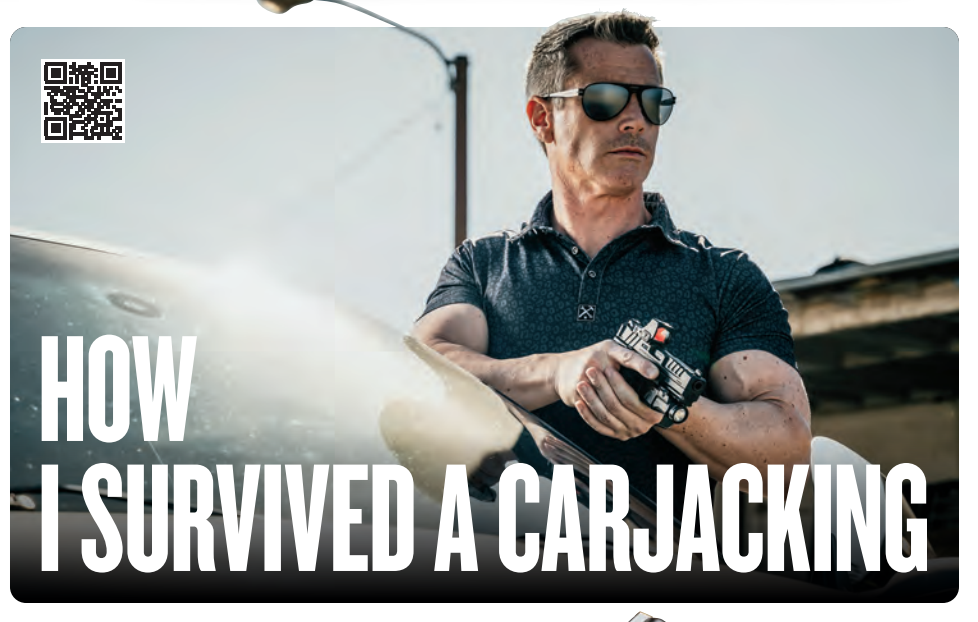
# WHAT IF THE M16 NEVER EXISTED?




# FLYING NUCLEAR REACTOR?

IMAGE: NATIONAL ARCHIVES (6362851)

# A COP KILLER'S BRUTAL LESSON



# HOW I SURVIVED A CARJACKING

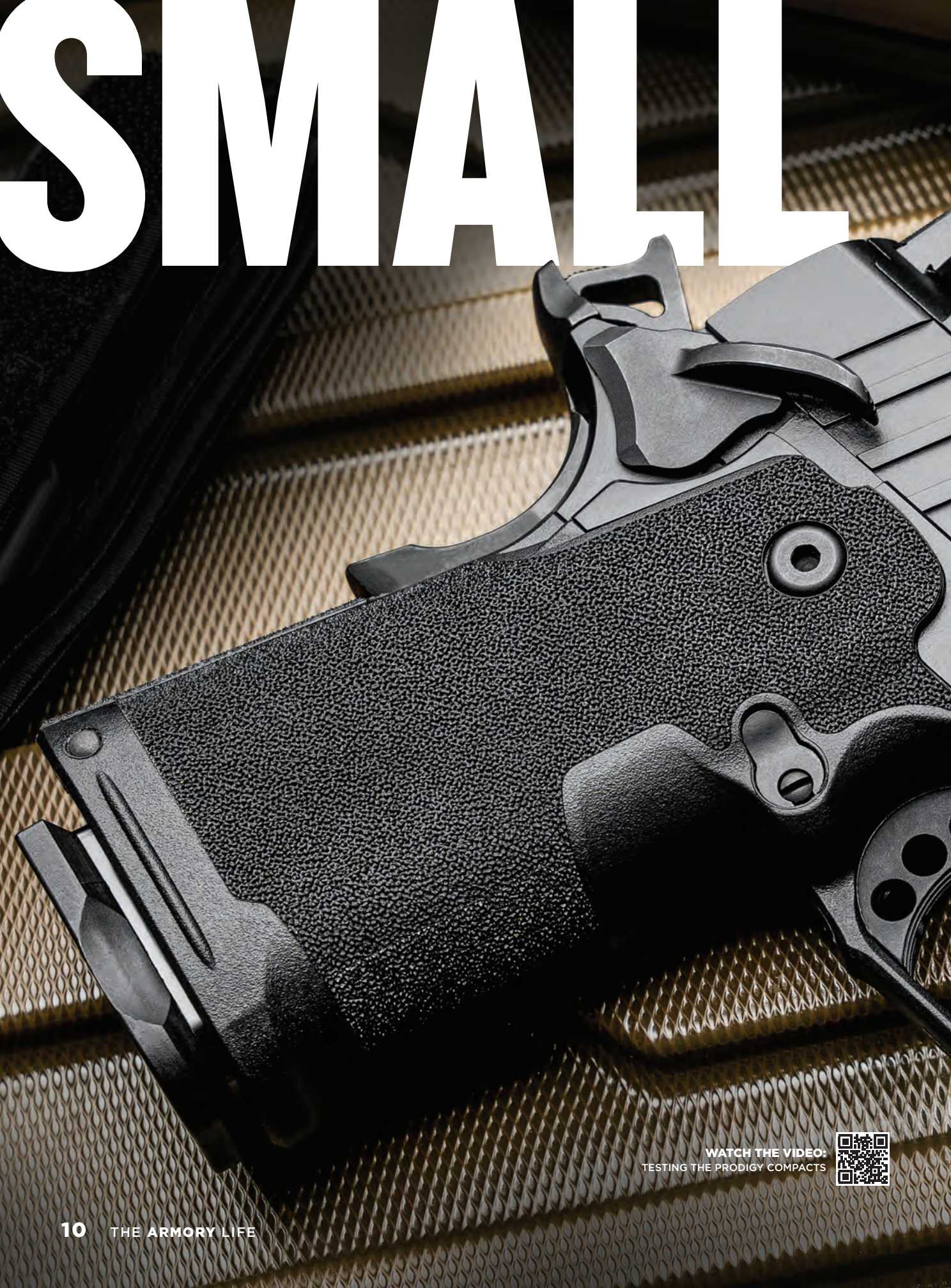


# AYOOB: MY TRAINING WAS WRONG



# IS THE XD IRRELEVANT?

# SMALL



**WATCH THE VIDEO:**
TESTING THE PRODIGY COMPACTS

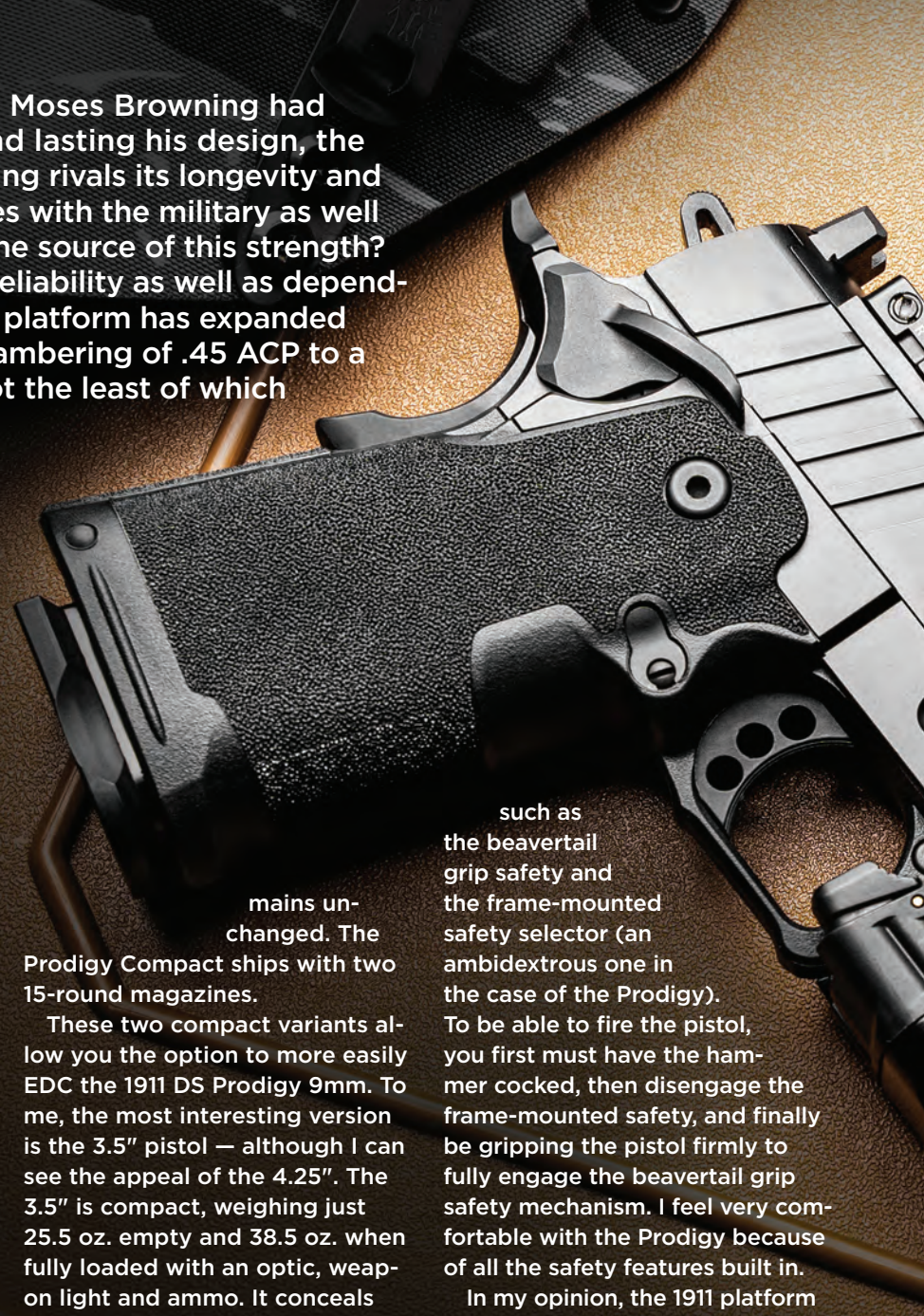
# WONDER




## THE 1911 DS PRODIGY COMPACT 9MM PISTOLS OFFER POTENT YET PACKABLE EDC PERFORMANCE.

JEREMY TREMP

**I OFTEN WONDER** if John Moses Browning had any idea how impactful and lasting his design, the 1911 pistol, would be. Nothing rivals its longevity and adaptability, serving in roles with the military as well as with civilian shooters. The source of this strength? The design offers rugged reliability as well as dependable performance, and the platform has expanded well beyond its original chambering of .45 ACP to a wide range of offerings, not the least of which is the ever-popular 9mm.



But what is the one area where the 1911 could possibly be improved over the original design? With the smaller 9mm cartridge, it's possible to increase the capacity over the original single-column magazine to a double-stack one while still retaining a manageably sized grip. With modern 9mm ammunition and nearly double the capacity over a single-stack .45, you can really understand the appeal here.

## ENTER THE PRODIGY

Since its release in 2022, the full-size Springfield Armory 1911 DS (which stands for "double-stack) Prodigy 9mm pistol has established itself as a great option for those looking for a modern 1911-style pistol. We've seen versions in Coyote Brown, as well as integrally compensated "Comp" models that add a ported slide and barrel for enhanced performance. To that line, Springfield has now added the Prodigy Compact AOS 9mm series.

The Prodigy Compact is offered in two barrel length options — 4.25″ or 3.5″. Not only is the slide and barrel shorter, but the grip has been shortened by about .4″ as well. The Prodigy Compacts have a capacity of 15+1 with the flush-fit magazines (compared to the 17+1 flush-fit capacity of the full-size original), making these some of the smallest double-stack 1911 pistols on the market. The slim width of the pistol remains unchanged. The Prodigy Compact ships with two 15-round magazines.

These two compact variants allow you the option to more easily EDC the 1911 DS Prodigy 9mm. To me, the most interesting version is the 3.5″ pistol — although I can see the appeal of the 4.25″. The 3.5″ is compact, weighing just 25.5 oz. empty and 38.5 oz. when fully loaded with an optic, weapon light and ammo. It conceals quite well, without much bulk on the waistband.

Benefits you say? Well, since you asked … .

## THE DETAILS

As noted, the 1911 is a proven and trusted design, especially when offered by a manufacturer like Springfield Armory. This is a company that has been producing award-winning 1911 pistols for decades.

A 1911 is a safe pistol to carry daily, with two safety features such as the beavertail grip safety and the frame-mounted safety selector (an ambidextrous one in the case of the Prodigy). To be able to fire the pistol, you first must have the hammer cocked, then disengage the frame-mounted safety, and finally be gripping the pistol firmly to fully engage the beavertail grip safety mechanism. I feel very comfortable with the Prodigy because of all the safety features built in.

In my opinion, the 1911 platform has far and above the best trigger of any pistol — and the Prodigy is no exception. While it's not a custom race gun, the stock trigger is still fantastic, giving little take-up with a defined break and a quick reset. It feels highly repeatable. There's a reason shooters tend to go on and on about a 1911's trigger — myself included.

Don't believe me? My fastest splits with the Prodigy 3.5″ Compact on the range were 0.15 seconds. It's a very fast gun. Also, during my range time, I put 500




**The Springfield Armory 1911 DS Prodigy Compacts in 3.5″ (left) and 4.25″ (right) offer users EDC-ready 9mm performance in two easy-to-carry sizes.**

rounds through the Prodigy Compact without a single malfunction.

Whether you prefer iron sights or a modern red dot, the Prodigy can accommodate either option. The Prodigy ships with a removable cover plate with an integral rear sight that can be replaced with an AOS plate made specifically for a wide range of individual optic footprints. AOS — which stands for "Agency Optic System" — is a plate-based system that offers the ability to fit a wide range of optics to your 1911 pistol. Each plate features an integrated rear sight.

With the matching AOS plate and optic, you can easily attach your favorite red dot to the pistol — and most of the time still retain co-witness with your front and rear iron sight as each plate features a dedicated rear sight unit. It's the best of both worlds! The front sight post of the Prodigy Compact has a tritium insert for great visibility in low-light conditions, a must for a defensive pistol. The rear sight notch is black with serrations to help diffuse sunlight. The pistols ship with one cover plate and one HEX Dragonfly plate. Additional plates are available from the Springfield Armory Store for $129.

# 1911 DS PRODIGY 3.5" COMPACT AOS




## PRODIGY COMPACT AOS

| | |
|---|---|
| CHAMBERING | 9mm |
| BARREL | 3.5"/4.25" |
| WEIGHT | 25.5/29 oz. |
| OVERALL LENGTH | 7"/7.8" |
| SIGHTS | Tritium dot front, serrated black rear |
| GRIPS | Polymer |
| ACTION | Single-action |
| FINISH | Cerakote |
| CAPACITY | 15+1 (two magazines included) |
| MSRP | $1,549 |

For ease of carry, the Prodigy's polymer grip module is mounted to a billet machined and hardcoat anodized 7075-T6 aluminum frame to reduce weight. Additionally, the beavertail has been shortened and the hammer recontoured to further reduce size and printing when worn concealed.

Handling the Prodigy is easy and intuitive. Springfield put a lot of thought into the controls and the feel of the pistol. The forward and rear slide serrations are deep and easy to get a good grip on to manipulate the pistol, even with sweaty or cold hands. When drawing the Prodigy, you will notice your thumb easily reaching and resting on the frame-mounted safety selector.

The polymer frame of the Prodigy is wrapped in Springfield's Adaptive Grip Texture, which increases the "grippiness" the tighter you wrap your hands around the pistol. It creates a generous amount of grip on the pistol without chewing up your hands or rubbing on your skin while wearing the pistol inside-the-waistband (IWB).

The slide is made from forged steel to ensure this pistol lasts a

# ARO-EVO

## THE NEXT EVOLUTION IN RIFLE OPTICS

ARO-EVO is the ARO (Advanced Rifle Optic) EVOlved. ARO-EVO features an all-new 26mm housing design that offers a larger sight picture providing the user with more information for improved performance shooting along with our new lower 1/3 co-witness pedestal mount. Additionally, ARO-EVO is available with our new Special Purpose Reticle (SPR) which is a bullet-drop compensating and ranging reticle which balances the performance of a 2MOA dot with accuracy at intermediate distances. ARO-EVO is available with our Special Purpose Reticle or a 2MOA dot only in Red, Green, and Gold.

**Shake Awake™**

**Solar Failsafe™**

**SPR (BDC Reticle)**




HOLOSUN

HOLOSUN.COM

lifetime, and then it's Cerakoted for protection (as is the aluminum frame). For unmatched accuracy, the Prodigy is outfitted with a match-grade bull barrel made of forged stainless steel that has a black DLC (diamond-like carbon) coating for durability.

## HANDS-ON

I set my Prodigy up with a Vortex Defender-CCW red dot and a Streamlight TLR-7 HL-X weaponlight. For the holster, I picked up an appendix-inside-the-waistband (AIWB) "Wingman" from QVO Tactical as well as a "Secondary" outside-the-waistband (OWB) version. The Wingman holster is super comfortable in the waistband and very sturdy. Besides the incredible customer service from QVO, my favorite feature of their holsters is the plethora of colors and wraps that are available from which to choose. For my Prodigy holsters, I chose Tiger Stripe Smoke and Tiger Stripe Arid canvas.

I have come to love the micro-sized Vortex Defender-CCW red dots on my pistols. They look superb and they have been rock-solid and dependable on all my pistols on which I've tested them.



**The author tested the pistol with a Vortex Defender-CCW red dot optic and a Streamlight TLR-7 HL-X weaponlight.**

Stretching out the wings of the two Prodigy Compacts at the range, I tested drawing from concealment from appendix as well as OWB at 3 o'clock under a light jacket. For ammo, I used 115-gr. Remington ball as well as some various flavors of Black Hills defensive ammunition. The pistols ate everything I threw at them.

As far as accuracy goes, standing at 10 yards shooting freestyle onto the head box of an IPSC target, my five-shot group size was about 1.2". This is more than enough accuracy for me in a defensive pistol, and I am sure I could really wring out some seriously tight groups at the bench with this pistol. Even shooting while moving as fast as I could from 10 yards in, I was shooting softball-sized groups.

I was able to draw from concealment and place shots on target in 1.05 seconds.

**The smaller compact variants of the Prodigy feature flush-fitting, 15-round magazines.**




## CONCLUSION

The new Prodigy Compact pistols allow you the option of carrying a powerful defensive tool in a small package. With an MSRP of $1,549, they offer a lot of pistol for a reasonable price. Be sure to check one out for yourself. I think you'll be impressed.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:**
SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM
STORE.SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM
STREAMLIGHT.COM
QVOTACTICAL.COM
VORTEXOPTICS.COM

YOUR PARTNER IN PROTECTION

# A DIFFERENT STREET EVERY DAY.

Whether on the road or at a festival, Julie and Eva love the freedom of the life they've created. They depend on Federal® as their Partner in Protection to keep it that way. No one else gives you the knowledge, training, or a more effective family of defense ammunition.




## WE CHOOSE FEDERAL

**Julie + Eva**
Ages 31 & 33 / BUSINESS OWNERS

Every Day Protection » PUNCH™

BUY NOW AT FEDERALPREMIUM.COM

© 2025 FEDERAL AMMUNITION

FEDERAL

## *THE ARMORY LIFE* INTERVIEWS:

# CAPT. DALE DYE USMC (RET.)

**TOM LAEMLEIN**

**ONE OF AMERICA'S** most well-known military storytellers, Capt. Dale Dye's personal war story began in 1964 when he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. Over the next six years, he served multiple tours in Vietnam and earned the Bronze Star with V for valor as well as three Purple Hearts for wounds suffered in combat.

Retiring from the Marines as a captain in 1984, he incorporated Warriors, Inc. the following year. This military/technical advising firm would present Dye with his next mission — bringing unyielding authenticity to Hollywood's military-themed films and shows.

Dye's first big production was his collaboration with fellow Vietnam War veteran, director Oliver Stone, in the Academy Award-winning 1986 film "Platoon". Additional credits include "Last of the Mohicans", "Saving Private Ryan", "The Great Raid", "Band of Brothers", "The Pacific", "Masters of the Air" and many more.

Dye's work has not been limited to being strictly behind the cameras. Along the way, he has appeared in numerous films and television shows and is also a celebrated novelist. He is also a close, personal friend.

It's truly a privilege and an honor to interview him for *The Armory Life*. Thank you, Capt. Dye, for taking the time to talk with us.

***THE ARMORY LIFE* (TAL):** Let's start at the beginning. Tell us about your formative years and how they prepared you for the life you've led.

**DALE DYE (DD):** My early influences were shaped by tales I heard from World War II vets. I hung on their every word, and I let my imagination run. I begged to be sent to military school. I don't know how my family afforded it, but I got my wish and spent four formative years at the Missouri Military Academy.

Once I graduated, there was no money left for college and scholarships in those days were hard to come by, so I was faced with few prospects besides farming or factory work.

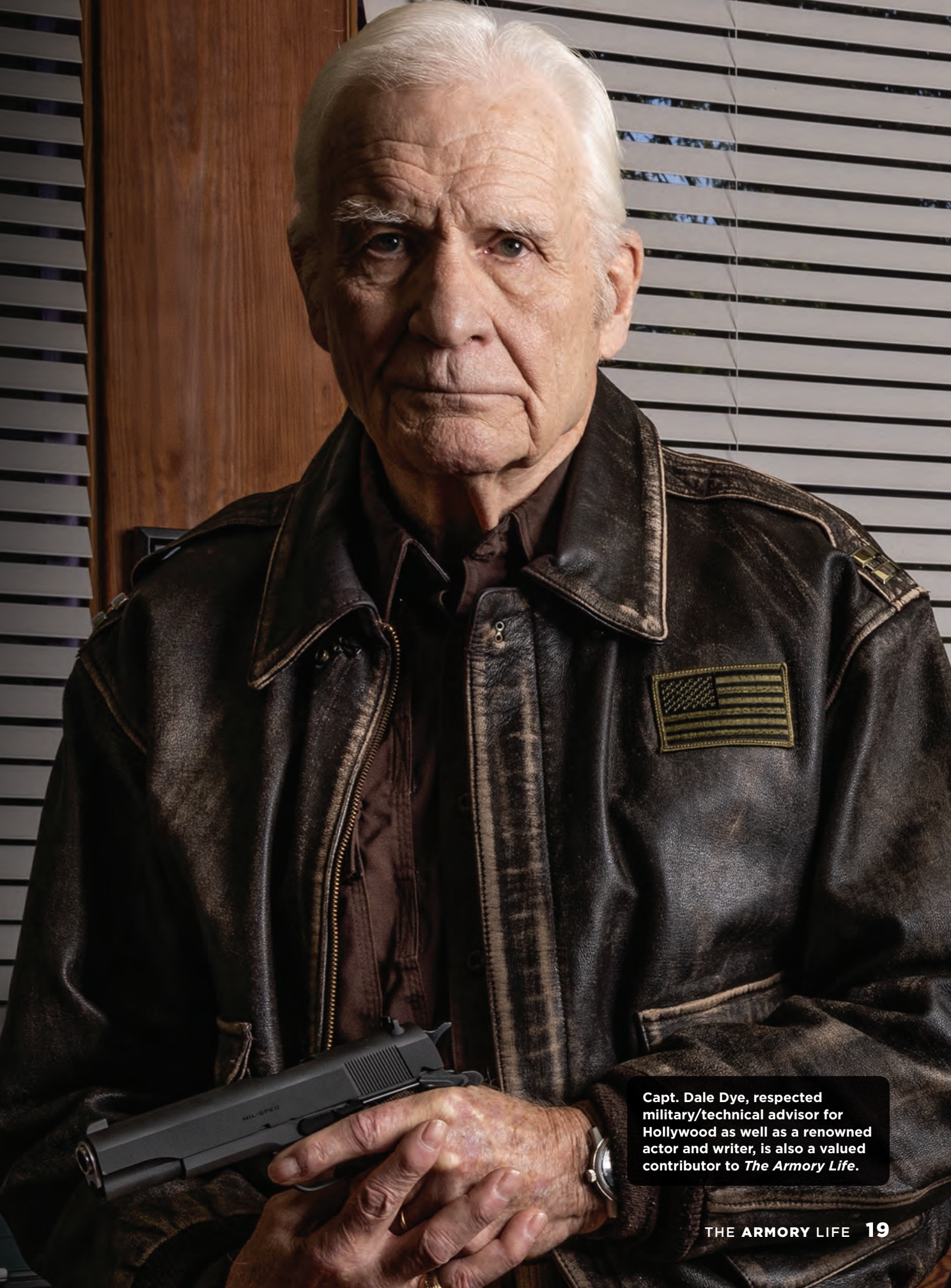
The military seemed like a natural choice. I pondered all the branches for a while in late 1963, but wound up choosing the Marine Corps for all sorts of adolescent romantic reasons. It proved to be the best decision of my young life.

**TAL:** You were considered a true "grunt" during the Vietnam War. While fighting a war is hard enough, you also had the responsibility of reporting on the conflict. Can you tell us about your work as a combat correspondent?

**DD:** In January 1964, the Marine Corps didn't guarantee you anything but a challenge and a hard time. That's what I was after, so I pleaded to become an infantryman. They granted my wish, and I trained as an 81mm mortarman for the first couple of years of my service.

One day during a field exercise, I met another Marine who was walking around with a camera and a notebook. He told me he

IMAGE: ALEX JOSEPH/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY



**Capt. Dale Dye, respected military/technical advisor for Hollywood as well as a renowned actor and writer, is also a valued contributor to *The Armory Life*.**




**In addition to providing his in-depth understanding of military topics as an advisor, Dye also has an impressive background playing roles in front of the camera.**

IMAGE: ALEX JOSEPH/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

was a Marine Corps Combat Correspondent and indicated it was a dream job in which a good man could do practically anything the Marine Corps had to offer.

The Marine Corps Combat Correspondent occupational specialty was a relatively tiny community in those days, and you had to prove yourself worthy of that kind of free enterprise in such a structured military environment. I had experience as an editor of my high school newspaper, a facility with language and a vivid imagination, so I finagled my way into the field.

At that point, I discovered that when they talked about a Marine Corps Combat Correspondent, the emphasis was on combat. As a newly promoted sergeant in the summer of 1967, I got orders to report to the 1st Marine Division in Vietnam.

I quickly learned that the only way to properly do the job of reporting on and celebrating the little guy in the field facing the enemy was to be there, to run to the sound of the guns. And we were constantly on the move, accompanying the grunts wherever they went. They might pull back to rest, but we were off on the next operation as there were so few of us to cover all the activity in I Corps. That sort of activity got a lot of us wounded several times.

**TAL:** After 20 years in the Marine Corps, you "retired" into a very busy career in media, publishing and the movie industry. What was that transition like, and what challenges did you face?

**DD:** I expect this was driven by that little creative bug that has always lived somewhere inside of me. I've always been a storyteller.

I'd finished a book and got it published just prior to retirement, so I thought maybe churning out novels would keep scratching the itch. But writing is a slow and intensely lonely experience, so I began to look around for something in addition.

One day, parked in front of the television watching Sam Fuller's brilliant Korean War film "The Steel Helmet", it occurred to me that I'd seen practically every war or military movie there was. Without realizing it, I was a confirmed movie buff ... especially anything to do with the military.

The more I thought about that, the more I realized that the common denominator was that most of the films I saw somehow wound up just pissing me off. They didn't reflect what I knew as reality among soldiers, and about war in general.

I decided what Hollywood needed was a combat-experienced man with a better plan for making realistic military movies that all veterans could identify and empathize with. They needed me! And they needed my brilliant scheme to train actors in a realistic environment, just like we train our active-duty military people.

I've often discovered that when you're ignorant like I was, you can do a lot of things smart people tell you can't be done. So, I packed my seabag and headed for Hollywood.

**TAL:** Your desire to bring realism to war films was finally realized in Oliver Stone's "Platoon". When did your interest in film production get started, and how did you fight your way through the naysayers to make a breakthrough in Hollywood?

**DD:** Hollywood had been making war films for decades without my input and didn't see any need to fix what they didn't think was broken. I was trying to convince anyone who would listen (and there weren't many of them) that I could improve the look and feel of war films and add to any actor's portrayal of a soldier. They just needed to understand that a large portion of their potential audiences had military experience and knew the difference between reality and Hollywood fantasy.

That was a hard sell, particularly when I proposed putting pampered actors through an intense, hyper-realistic training experience prior to filming. For the most part, I was being written off as a no-talent, non-creative cretin who just didn't get filmmaking.

I was about to give up in frustration when I noticed a small article in one of the Hollywood trade papers that indicated that a heretofore relatively unknown writer/director named Oliver Stone was about to make a Vietnam War movie based on his own experience as a combat infantryman.

I won't reveal how I pulled it off, but I managed to get a few minutes of Stone's time in a studio and pitched my ideas. As I was hoping he would, Oliver understood what I wanted to do with his actors prior to shooting. I wanted them to look the part, feel the part, and most importantly, understand the Vietnam combat experience before they tried to portray it on film. He bought into it and gave me 33 actors to take to the Philippine jungles and train them for the film that would become "Platoon".

**TAL:** Your realistic boot camp training sessions for actors are legendary in the industry. How did they come about?

**DD:** Prior to my methods being broadly accepted these days, training an actor with no prior military experience was simply a matter of handing them the appropriate uniform, showing them how to handle a weapon, and then just letting them act. That's why they call it acting, right?



IMAGE: DREAMWORKS PICTURES/PARAMOUNT PICTURES

**Capt. Dye is shown here (center) with the primary cast members from the film "Saving Private Ryan", on which he was Senior Military Advisor.**

It's a recipe for disaster in my book. I wanted actors to understand the reality before they tried to act it. I wanted to train their bodies, but also give them insights into intellect and emotions that were completely alien to them.

The only way to do that in my view — as I refined my methods — was full immersion into the world of the grunt (or sailor, airman, etc.). So, as we do in training any military person, I adopted a crawl, walk, run approach over a series of days or weeks prior to shooting. When I say full immersion, I mean living in a hole they just dug, eating nasty field rations, and working all day and all night with absolutely no outside contact or distractions.

Done properly with the right guidance, training becomes reality, and that reality comes through in their performance.

**TAL:** You've mentioned to me in the past that in certain cases some of the combat training you gave the actors had to be "unlearned" on the set to serve the needs of film production. Could you tell us a little about that?

**DD:** Once I have worked with an actor, you've hopefully got the actor-soldier doing everything just the way a real soldier would do it in combat. However, sometimes the director wants something different for the camera.

I've found the best way to handle that is to not get your skivvies in a twist and just say "no." Say "yes, but" and suggest something as close as possible to reality that also meets their dramatic or cinematic needs. It usually works. Not always, but usually. And the more they come to view me as a fellow dramatist and filmmaker, the more likely they are to go along with my suggestions.

**Dye told us he enjoys portraying actual historical characters. He is shown here as Col. Robert F. Sink in "Band of Brothers".**



IMAGE: HBO/DREAMWORKS PICTURES

**TAL:** Just how badly did you wear out those young actors in the Philippine jungle as you prepared for "Platoon"?

**DD:** The key is to know where that line between realistic experience and stupidity lies and acknowledge it. I did that, walking that line most of the time training on active duty, so I was familiar with how far is generally too far.

I pushed them hard, day and night, with little to no sleep, so they understood what it felt like during the real thing. I demanded they carry the actual gear, so their bodies became accustomed to moving fast under heavy weight. I let them modify their gear and uniforms the way we did with our stuff in combat. All of this led to valuable insight that showed up on the screen.

Of course, I believe in leading from the front. I never demand an actor in training do something I can't demonstrate and accomplish first.

We trained for three weeks. The cast was exhausted when I brought them out of the bush, but they looked and acted like combat soldiers.

**TAL:** What has it been like to work closely with superstar actors, including Tom Hanks and Tom Cruise, and to collaborate with directors of the stature of Steven Spielberg? Can you share a few of your favorite Hollywood stories with us?

**DD:** I've been fortunate to train and/or perform with some seriously big movie stars over the years, but I rarely think about them that way. There are no stars in my training outfits and no deference to standing or reputation. I run an equal-opportunity school of hard knocks.

With actors like Tom Hanks, Tom Cruise, Sam Jackson, Tommy Lee Jones, Willem Dafoe and a good number of others you'd instantly recognize, they are basically dedicated, very visual and dramatic storytellers. That makes us kindred spirits. And with directors, it's much the same. Steven Spielberg is a history buff, as is Tom Hanks. They want to get it right.

**TAL:** Without asking you to recite all your film and television credits as an actor, approximately how many roles have you had? Any particular favorites?

**DD:** Without an actual count, I'd suspect I've played roles in about 40 or more films and television projects. Some say I'm the most typecast guy in Hollywood, alongside my good friend, the late R. Lee Ermey. I love to do comedy, but don't get much chance to show that side of my personality.

I love the chance to portray actual characters from history, so I'll always fondly remember my time as Col. Robert Sink in "Band of Brothers" and Col. Leonard Wood in "Rough Riders".

**TAL:** Before Hollywood, you transitioned from combat correspondent to fiction writer. What was it like to write your first book?

**DD:** My first book, "Run Between the Raindrops", met with some critical success, so I continued to write. As I'm looking at my bookshelves, I see about 15 books I've written over the years. Blame it on the muse or the bug, but I deep down do love the lonely business of banging around on a keyboard, imagining and describing, creating worlds or

## SHAKE DAVIS SERIES

**I HAD A CHANCE** to chat a bit with Capt. Dye about Warriors Publishing Group, a publishing arm of the current Warriors, Global advising firm. The company's purpose is to bring military veteran authors and engaged readers together, telling the stories that help us appreciate the service and sacrifice of those in uniform.




Capt. Dye himself has numerous titles published here, with the fictional Shake Davis series of books standing out in particular.

Focused on Shake Davis, a retired Marine officer with lots of SpecOps experience, the series has the protagonist traveling the world, continuously plunged into dark and dangerous places. Many of these locations have a connection to Marine Corps history.

Dye explained that he bases the characters in the books on people he either knew or served with as a sort of homage.

Shake's best buddy in the books is his real-life best friend, Mike Stokey. Dye first met Stokey during his time in Vietnam, and they have been friends for half a century. Stokey is also the XO of Warriors, Global.

Dye also told me he'll be returning to the Shake Davis/File Series when he's finished editing his autobiography.

Be sure to visit the Warriors Publishing Group website to check out not only the Shake Davis series, but the whole host of available military-themed books.

**— Mike Humphries**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:**
WARRIORSPUBLISHING.COM

IMAGE: CARSON MCDANIEL/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

events that I can share with others.

I'm an avid reader. If I'm fascinated by something I've read, then a concept forms, and I'm prompted to transfer my idea or an image from my brain to paper or screen. Eventually, it becomes an article like you might see in *The Armory Life*, a book or a screenplay.

**TAL:** It seems that your wife Julia Dye is just as much of a historian as you are. How did you two meet each other?

**DD:** We met when she was a featured member of the cast on "Starship Troopers", but she tells the story better than I do.

**JULIA DYE:** When we met, I got an overpowering sense he was going to be important to me.

Dale was surprised by my Ph.D. in Hoplology (a combination of military history and anthropology), and we found we had a lot of arcane interests in common. Our relationship developed from professional respect to being best friends. Later, we fell in love. Not a bad way for a relationship to progress.

**TAL:** Dale, you are not only known as a military expert, but as a firearms enthusiast as well. What can you tell us about shooting your Springfield Hellcat Pro?

**DD:** When I started writing for *The Armory Life*, one of the things on the site that caught my eye was the Desert FDE Hellcat Pro in 9mm. It seemed to have all the right stuff. The guys sent one along for me to shoot, and I promptly did just that.

It's a beauty. It has great ergonomics and is completely controllable in quick double-taps. And it's one of the first truly comfortable pistols I've found for concealed carry, coupled with a nice leather Galco IWB holster. I regularly walk out with it in an appendix carry position. That gun is a winner, even for a guy who loves Old Slabsides!




IMAGE: ALEX JOSEPH/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

**Dye has been regularly carrying a Desert FDE Hellcat Pro 9mm pistol topped with a red dot optic in a Galco IWB holster.**

**TAL:** Do you have any other projects that you'd like to talk about?

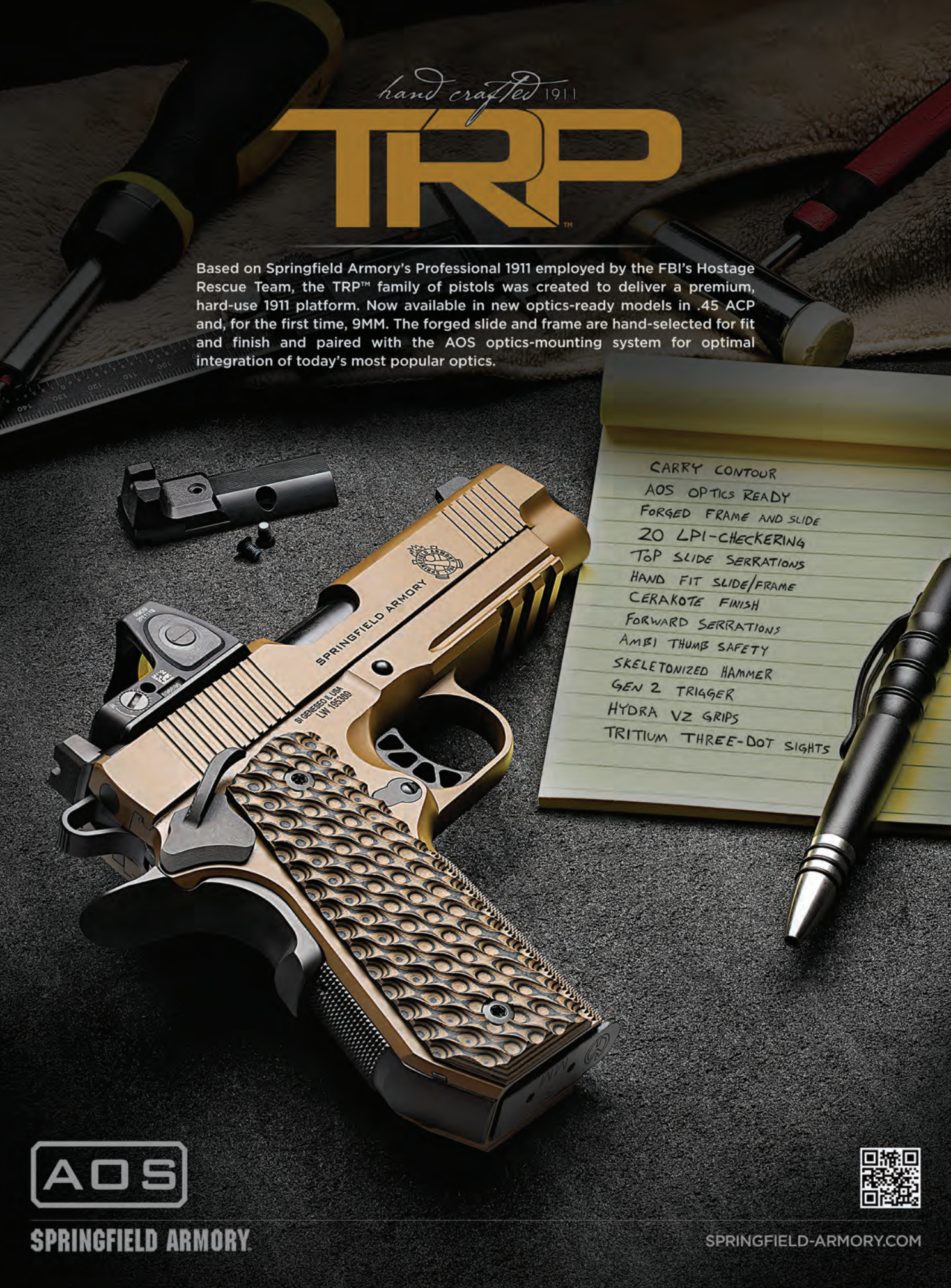
**DD:** I can tell you that I'm working diligently on my autobiography. I can't provide you with a specific publication date, but I'll have it done as soon as possible. It's slated for release through Warriors Publishing Group, and you'll be able to read my whole story not too far down the road.

**TAL:** Thank you for taking the time to give us this fascinating insight into your life. I'm sure our readers will appreciate getting to know more about the man whom they have seen in front of the camera all these years, as well as the one behind it making sure their favorite military-themed films and shows are as realistic as they can be.

**DD:** It was my pleasure. Looking back over a lot of years and a lot of work on productions, I hope some of that has improved and enhanced the way audiences view the military and the experience of combat on the screen. Some say I changed the way Hollywood makes military movies. That would make a fine epitaph.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *This is an abridged version of the interview. For the unabridged version, please scan the QR code to visit the website.*

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:**
DALEDYE.COM
SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM
GALCOGUNLEATHER.COM


hand crafted 1911
TRP™
Based on Springfield Armory's Professional 1911 employed by the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team, the TRP™ family of pistols was created to deliver a premium, hard-use 1911 platform. Now available in new optics-ready models in .45 ACP and, for the first time, 9MM. The forged slide and frame are hand-selected for fit and finish and paired with the AOS optics-mounting system for optimal integration of today's most popular optics.
CARRY CONTOUR
AOS OPTICS READY
FORGED FRAME AND SLIDE
20 LPI-CHECKERING
TOP SLIDE SERRATIONS
HAND FIT SLIDE/FRAME
CERAKOTE FINISH
FORWARD SERRATIONS
AMBI THUMB SAFETY
SKELETONIZED HAMMER
GEN 2 TRIGGER
HYDRA VZ GRIPS
TRITIUM THREE-DOT SIGHTS
SPRINGFIELD ARMORY
SI GENESEO IL USA
LW 105309
AOS
SPRINGFIELD ARMORY
SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM

# UNDER C




**WATCH THE VIDEO:**
TESTING THE ECHELON COMP

# ONTROL

## THE ECHELON 4.5F COMP 9MM DELIVERS A NUANCED BALANCE OF PERFORMANCE AND POWER.

JEREMY TREMP

**IF I TOLD YOU THAT** you could have a flatter-shooting pistol with reduced felt recoil that put you back on target faster, would you be interested? That's exactly what Springfield Armory has done with the Echelon 4.5F Comp pistol chambered in 9mm.

Following in the footsteps of the Hellcat Pro Comp and the 1911 DS Prodigy Comp, we now have access to that same technology on the Echelon family of pistols. I am thrilled for this release as the Echelon is currently the main pistol I train with, and now it just got even better.

### SOLID SOURCE

If you're new to the Echelon 4.5F, it's a 4.5″-barreled striker-fired handgun chambered in 9mm. The Echelon is equipped with a revolutionary, patented Variable Interface System for easily mounting a wide range of optics, and also a self-contained serialized Central Operating Group chassis inside the interchangeable polymer grip module. Combined, these make the Echelon one of the most modular, feature-rich, cutting-edge, technology-packed pistols on the market.

The Variable Interface System utilizes a set of movable self-locking pins that allow you the ability to direct mount — without any plates — more than 30 of the most popular red dot optics on the market. This also allows co-witnessing through most optics without the need for suppressor-height sights. This system is also one of the most robust optics-mounting systems to be integrated onto a modern firearm, in my opinion.

Besides the optics system, I am most intrigued by the Central Operating Group in the Echelon. This is the serialized portion of the pistol that houses the trigger system, allowing you to swap out grip modules easily. This way, you can swap out a different color or size grip module with ease.

Also included in the box with the pistol are easily swappable backstraps in small, medium and large sizes to better personalize the pistol to your hands. Another cool feature of the backstrap is that it has an integrated armorer tool to assist in taking down the pistol for cleaning.

The Echelon is designed for hard use in mind. The grip module's Adaptive Grip Texture — the same as that of the Springfield Hellcat — features a combination of tall flattened pyramid cuts and shorter pointed pyramid cuts. This gives you a comfortable and non-snag grip that also allows for a more aggressive texture the tighter you grip the pistol. In addition, the mag release and slide lock are both ambidextrous for either-hand shooting.

The slide serrations on the Echelon are aggressive and aid in manipulating the slide in virtually all conditions imaginable, ensuring positive handling of the pistol. The front of the slide has a "trench" machined into it, which gives you a natural indexing point for press checks. The rear of the slide is flared out to give you better purchase on the slide for additional engagement.

The Echelon ships with a flush-fit 17-round and an extended 20-round magazine. The magazines are blacked out in a scratch- and wear-resistant coating. In addition, the pistol is offered in 15- and 10-round versions for restricted locales. Those also come with two magazines.

## SETTING IT APART

Now, let's talk about what makes this new Echelon variant even more special. The Echelon 4.5F Comp pistol features an integral compensator that is designed to produce a notable reduction in muzzle rise while still retaining all the reliability you've come to expect from the Echelon.

If you're unfamiliar with compensators, they consist of a port (or ports) that vents gas upwards that, in turn, pushes the muzzle downwards. This reduces muzzle rise and perceived recoil and puts you back on target quicker for fast follow-up shots.

On the Echelon 4.5F Comp, the compensator is built into the slide and barrel. The barrel and slide are both milled perfectly with a matching opening to vent gas upwards and slightly out of the sides of the slide. You will notice the port contours from the top of the slide and slightly down the sides. This ensures the greatest volume of gas escaping the port is directed upwards and out to keep you on target with precision and ease.



You will also note that the port is located forward of the tritium/luminescent front sight, ensuring that the compensator will not affect your sight picture when firing.

## RANGE-PREPPING

I rigged my Echelon Comp out with a Surefire X300 Turbo weaponlight and a Vortex Defender-ST red dot sight. Since this is a full-size duty pistol, I utilized a Safariland 6360 Level 3 holster. This holster is robust, looks great and has all the protection you would want or need on a duty belt.

To be honest, this is my favorite way to train at the range. The ease of drawing, reloading and carrying everything I need feels great and makes the process of testing and training much more fun. It's kind of akin to driving a sports car where you can push the performance, speed and handling. It also requires more of you, requiring you to perfect your draw, presentation, reload process and accuracy.

Beyond basic shooting fundamentals, accuracy and handling, I wanted to test different types and weights of ammunition. When I shoot a compensated firearm, my first thoughts always go to reliability and ammo preferences. I set out to test 115-, 124- and 147-gr. ball ammo as well as some defensive ammunition in the same weights. It's important to test for yourself the primary ammo you may be using in your firearms to know their strengths or limitations. I fully expected the Echelon Comp to run perfectly through all the ammo I set out to test, but there is nothing like first-hand experience.

There is also the fact that compensators need a specific amount of gas to be most effective. The pistol should feel different with each of these ammo types, and I intended to find the ammo that felt the best with the compensator to give me the maximum reduction in muzzle rise.

## WHERE IT COUNTS

I hit the range with three flavors of ball ammo and three flavors of defensive ammo. For the ball

### ECHELON 4.5F COMP

| | |
|---|---|
| CHAMBERING | 9mm |
| BARREL LENGTH | 4.5" |
| WEIGHT | 23.9 oz. |
| OVERALL LENGTH | 8" |
| SIGHTS | U-Dot |
| GRIPS | Polymer grip module |
| ACTION | Striker-fired |
| FINISH | Black Melonite |
| CAPACITY | 17+1, 20+1 (one of each included) |
| MSRP | $749 |




**The 9mm Echelon 4.5F Comp pistol features an integral comp to reduce muzzle flip and enhance performance.**



**The barrel and slide are cut with a matching port, which vents gas upwards to counteract muzzle rise during shooting.**

ammo, I grabbed 147-gr. Fiocchi Range Dynamics, some basic 124-gr. ammo I bought in bulk and 115-gr. Remington UMC. For the defensive ammo, I packed Nosler 124-gr. ASP, 147-gr. Remington Bonded and 115-gr. Hornady Critical Defense. This selection of loads allowed me to test a wide range of ammo weights and types from multiple manufacturers to really see how the Echelon 4.5" Comp performed.

I started with the 147-gr. Fiocchi FMJ , and the first shots were actually quite surprising to me. I've been impressed with the Echelon and how well it shoots, but the integral compensator of the Echelon 4.5F Comp added a notably beneficial reduction in muzzle rise. The pistol is easy to shoot fast, returning to zero quickly and keeping my sights on target easily. Shooting hammer pairs on steel at 30 yards was near effortless.

The trigger in the Echelon feels fantastic, and with the Comp I was able to manipulate the trigger faster than normal with greater accuracy than my non-compensated Echelon.

I then moved on to the 124- and 115-gr. ball ammo variants. As with the 147-gr. load, they also ran without issue, feeding and extracting effortlessly.

**The author used a wide range of 9mm ammunition during his range test, with the pistol performing flawlessly.**

PULSAR

# Definitive Detail.

# THERMION 2 LRF 60MM SERIES

THERMAL IMAGING

HD Thermal Imaging Rangefinding Riflescope

**Prevention, protection, predation...** regardless of what drives you to use thermal optics, Thermion 2 LRF 60-Series Thermal Riflescopes emphasize why Pulsar remains the most trusted brand in thermal optics. The Thermion 2 LRF 60-Series is available in three options (XL50 @ 1024×768, 2.5-20x | XP50 @ 640×480, 3-24x | XG50 @ 640×480, 4-32x) and boast HD AMOLED 2560×2560 displays, 8-color display palettes, up to 3,000-yard heat-signature detection range in zero light and long battery life from Pulsar's internal battery, as well as two rechargeable APS 3 batteries (included).

Pulsar Thermion 2 LRF 60-Series Thermal Riflescopes also include an integral laser rangefinder accurate to 875 yards (+/- 1 yd), 10 reticle styles in 9 colors, picture-in-picture, 30mm American Defense Manufacturing cantilever mount and more.



Scan here for more information

Mobile App STREAM VISION 2

Google play

Available on the App Store

www.pulsarnv.com | 817-225-0310 | sales@pulsarnv.com




Moving into the defensive ammo revealed more of the same; a nice, subtle reduction in muzzle rise and felt recoil, while operating with 100% reliability and efficiency. Overall, I would say that the Hornady Critical Defense 115-gr. ammo had the greatest perceived reduction in muzzle rise of all the tested loads.

Once I got the hang of the pistol and how it ran, I worked more on drawing and firing quickly once I had a solid sight picture.

I then moved into one of my favorite drills — executing quick reloads from my battle belt. When running the belt, I like to have the larger 20-round magazines in the pistol pouches as they are easy to grab.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

I have to say that this was one of my more memorable and enjoyable range sessions in a while as far as pistols go.

The Echelon 4.5F Comp is based on a pistol I've grown very fond of, but now it is even better with the integral compensator. Basically, the Echelon 4.5F Comp allows me to shoot quicker with more accuracy and confidence.

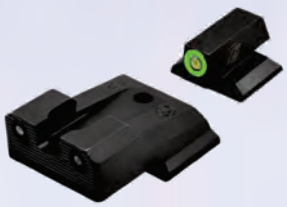
If you get the chance to check out the family of Echelon pistols, do yourself a favor and take the 4.5F Comp variant for a test drive. Based on my experience with it, I think you'll be pleasantly surprised at the newfound speed you can get while still retaining good accuracy and reliability.

As always, tools alone don't make you a better shooter — training and time invested will be the great equalizer. But, having a high-quality pistol that can deliver is still an absolute necessity. Get out there and brush up on those skills!

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:**
SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM
SAFARILAND.COM
SUREFIRE.COM
VORTEXOPTICS.COM

XS SIGHTS
FASTEST SIGHTS IN ANY LIGHT

FIGHT.
DON'T FUMBLE.
R3D 2.0 NIGHT SIGHTS






SCAN THE QR CODE
TO LEARN MORE.

MGW
MIDWEST
GUN WORKS

SHOP NOW

MIDWESTGUNWORKS.COM

GUN PARTS
ACCESSORIES
FIREARMS
AMMUNITION
GUNSMITHING
TOOLS
APPAREL
SUPPRESSORS

# TAILOR




The Springfield Armory M1A Scout Squad rifle in .308 features a forward Picatinny rail, shown here topped off with a Burris Scout 2-7×32mm scope.

IMAGE: CARSON MCDANIEL/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

# -MADE

## DOES SPRINGFIELD ARMORY'S M1A SCOUT SQUAD CHECK ALL THE RIGHT BOXES?

JOE KURTENBACH

**THE FIRST TIME** I handled an M14 rifle was at Warrior Base, a training installation in the Republic of Korea, during the Spring of 2009. We were preparing for individual weapons qualifications with our 5.56x45mm NATO M4 carbines and conducting crew-served weapons familiarization with the M240 machine guns chambered for the 7.62x51mm NATO cartridge.

As Cavalry, being composed of Uncle Sam's strongest and most gifted delinquents, we clearly had no use for the puny M249 SAW (aka M249 light machine gun) chambered in 5.56 NATO. For us, it was the 27-lb. M240 beast, or bust.

### A RIFLEMAN'S RIFLE

We had more than a dozen firing positions going at once, but at the end of the line was an anomaly, a lone figure prone behind a wood-stocked scoped rifle. Firing to a cadence only he could hear, the rifleman dropped target after pop-up target, clearing the outfield of green silhouettes between the 300- and 600-yard lines.

South Korea, during that time, was an interesting waystation for soldiers. It was a mix of green troopers, like me, and seasoned warriors fresh off of combat rotations. The result was a no-B.S. environment where you could get smart or get strong, and the veteran non-commissioned officers couldn't care less which route you picked. You were going to contribute to the unit, and you were going to train.

The marksman at the end of the firing line was the troop's only sniper-qualified NCO. He was a gaunt, wiry, wraith of a man. He had a temper, but also a sharp wit and a comedic gift




with regard to the gallows humor that is so common in the military. In another era, we might have said he was battle-weary. But in 2009, right after the surge in Iraq and just before the surge in Afghanistan, he was just another cavalry trooper, and one hell of shot.

Having assembled a small crowd of interested gawkers, the sniper stepped back from the rifle and let us all take a turn. He'd explain to each new shooter the placement of the controls and the operation of the scope.

Compared to the aluminum and plastic so prevalent in the M16 rifle and M4 carbine, the M14 may have felt heavy and archaic — but also exceedingly capable. With each press of the trigger, the buttstock thumped the shooter's shoulder with .30-cal. recoil as if to say, "Wake up, son! Keep up the fire!"

## TIME IN SERVICE

The M14 was adopted by the U.S. Army in the 1950's, with familial ties to the revered M1 Garand. It came too late for the treacherous terrain of Korea, and was ultimately deemed too long, too heavy and too wooden for the dense, humid jungles of Vietnam. By 1967, it was replaced in common issue by iterations of Stoner's aerospace-inspired AR-15 platform in the 5.56x45mm NATO round.

Yet, despite this relegation, the M14 and its .30-cal. 7.62x51mm NATO cartridge found a niche among military snipers and designated marksmen. The rifle's range and power offered units a tool that hit harder and reached farther than their standard-issue long guns.

Since that day at Warrior Base, I've been enamored by the classic lines and ballistic utility of the M14-pattern rifle. I was, and am, awed by the fact that a then half-century-old design was still found in U.S. Army armories across the globe.

## RUNNING SHORT

If you are a reader of this magazine, it's safe to say you are probably familiar with the story behind the Springfield Armory M1A

rifle in 7.62x51mm NATO/.308 Win. If not, the short version is that the Geneseo, Illinois-based Springfield Armory brought a civilian-legal, semi-auto-only version of the legendary M14 rifle to the market just over 50 years ago. The result was the opportunity for shooters to own their own version of this revered walnut-and-steel service rifle.

## PERFORMANCE (100 YDS.)
### M1A SCOUT SQUAD .308

| LOAD | VELOCITY | GROUP (BEST) | GROUP (AVG.) |
|---|---|---|---|
| HORNADY MATCH 168-GR. BTHP | 2,890 fps | 1.23″ | 1.46″ |
| LEHIGH DEFENSE 160-GR. XC | 2,868 fps | 1.15″ | 1.54″ |
| REMINGTON 180-GR. CORE-LOKT TIPPED | 2,446 fps | 1.37″ | 1.59″ |

Accuracy results for five, three-shot groups measured in inches at 100 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocity is the average of 10 shots measured in feet per second (fps) by a Garmin Xero C1 Chronograph. Abbreviations: BTHP (boat-tail hollow point), gr. (grains), XC (Xtreme Chaos).

**Note the bolt lock tab on the left side of the M1A's receiver. Rifle shown fitted with optional 20-round magazine.**




Whether protecting the homestead or medaling in service rifle matches, the accuracy, power and reliability of this rifle has wide appeal among American shooters. Springfield has met that demand with a range of M1A offerings, including the Scout Squad model, reviewed here.

Across the line, the company has catered to the M14 purists by retaining wood stock options. Synthetic stock options are also available, and their configurations vary based on model, but the classic look and profile of the M1 and M14 are faithfully rendered in walnut to my particular tastes. Wood stock models also feature flip-up metal buttplates and the familiar sling swivels fore and aft.

Allow me a brief aside to note the quality of the wood stocks. I first saw the particular M1A Scout Squad I tested at a television filming event, and I was blown away by how beautiful the wood was. It wouldn't look out of place on a sporting shotgun, with an even, undulating grain. I noted the serial number and asked that it not be let back into circulation. Truthfully, though, all the specimens I've seen since have been equally appealing.

## ACTION ITEMS

Riflemen who appreciate the classics will be familiar with the M1A action, but for those new to the platform, I'll offer a quick synopsis and help locate the controls.

Like the Garand and the M14, the M1A

IMAGE: CARSON MCDANIEL/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY




is a gas-operated repeating rifle. When a round is fired, pressurized gas is siphoned off the barrel to exert rearward pressure on the op rod. That pressure powers the rifle's action open, extracting and ejecting the spent cartridge case and compressing the recoil spring. As the gas pressure subsides, the recoil spring provides the forward energy required to close the action, which picks up and chambers a fresh round on its way into battery.

The action can be manually opened by the right-side charging handle, which is integral to the op rod assembly. For those wondering, it does reciprocate during firing. A small bolt-lock tab is located on the left side of the action and will hold the bolt in the rearward position. The bolt is released by slight rearward pressure on the charging handle, or by pressing on the bolt-lock tab.

**The author tested the M1A Scout Squad at the range, shooting it off-hand as well as from the bench. He found it to be both reliable and accurate.**



## NOT BOXED IN

A primary advancement of the M14 over the semi-automatic M1 Garand was its ability to feed from detachable box magazines. Keen observers will note, though, that the M14 and M1A actions feature an interface for stripper clips, which can be used as a field-expedient method for topping off magazines without fully removing the gun's ammo supply. While Springfield M1A rifles ship with a 10-round unit, the 20-round ones are available from the Springfield Armory Store.

The magazine release lever is located behind the magazine well. When a mag is inserted and you want to remove it, simply squeeze the release tab toward the magazine and rotate it forward and free. To insert, rock the magazine back into place in an opposite motion. In the same vicinity, the safety lever is located within a channel at the front of the triggerguard. In the forward position, the trigger can be pressed and the rifle will fire. In the rearward position, though, the trigger is blocked from moving.

Speaking of the trigger, it's a two-stage National Match assembly. It's important to remember that this is a commercial product based on a service rifle design,




IMAGE: CARSON MCDANIEL/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

and I've never met a mil-spec trigger worth a damn — excluding the M1911, of course. The trigger on my test Scout Squad had a very clean trigger pull with a discernible wall and a crisp break.

## THE DETAILS

Within the M1A rifle line, two features define the Scout Squad configuration. First, its shortened barrel. Springfield Armory took the standard M1A 22" barrel down to 18". The pipe retains the 1:11" rifling twist rate, but the Scout Squad replaces the flash hider with a radial muzzle brake to help tame recoil.

The second feature of note is a forward-mounted, 4" segment of Picatinny rail. Whether or not the "Scout" moniker for this M1A has anything to do with Jeff Cooper's scout rifle concept, the ability to mount an optic forward of the action is bound to draw comparison.

In addition to the rail, the M1A Scout Squad comes with National Match iron sights. They include a 0.062" blade front and a 0.069" aperture in the rear. The rear sight is fully adjustable via the knurled dials on either side of the assembly: left for elevation, right for windage.

The rifle's combination of features appeals to me. The Scout Squad is compact and maneuverable, yet packs enough power to solve most problems you might face.

## AT THE RANGE

To evaluate the M1A Scout Squad's capabilities, it was off to the range for a variety of exercises. In order to assess the rifle's factory sights and handling characteristics, I set up an array of targets from 7 yards out to 100 yards, and engaged them from various shooting positions.

At just over 9 lbs. fully loaded, the wood-stocked Scout Squad is no lightweight. Still, it shoulders quickly and swings like a dangerous game rifle — quick, if intentional. Interestingly, although the stock eschews any texture or checkering so common to polymer wonder guns, the walnut shows its classic quality. A firm hold was natural, and I never felt my grip slipping.

The iron sights were excellent and absolutely spot-on from the factory. This was evidenced on a reduced-size 25-meter silhouette target that I engaged from standing at 100 yards. Firing 10 rounds, the impacts were clustered nicely in just more than a fist-size group. Aim small, miss small.

Moving on to formal accuracy testing, I opted to add a magnified optic in the form of the Burris Scout 2-7×32 riflescope. Long-eye-relief scopes like the Burris Scout aren't as prevalent as they used to be, but I'm hopeful that they will stick around both for scout-configured rifles and hunting handguns.

From the bench, the M1A Scout Squad proved itself to be a solid inch-and-a-half rifle at 100 yards. During my service, I was never issued a rifle that could group under 2", so this M1A was just dandy for me. Remember, accuracy for service rifles — outside of competition shooting — is kind of a pass/fail consideration, and a man-size target is far more forgiving than a 10-ring. This one easily surpasses that benchmark and matches more closely with its civilian roots.

## M1A SCOUT SQUAD

| | |
|---|---|
| **CHAMBERING** | .308 Win. |
| **BARREL** | 18" |
| **WEIGHT** | 8 lbs., 8 oz.; 9 lbs., 3 oz. |
| **OVERALL LENGTH** | 40.33" |
| **SIGHTS** | Aperture rear |
| **STOCK** | Composite, Walnut |
| **ACTION** | Semi-auto |
| **FINISH** | Black |
| **CAPACITY** | 10 (one) |
| **MSRP** | $1,945-$2,087 |

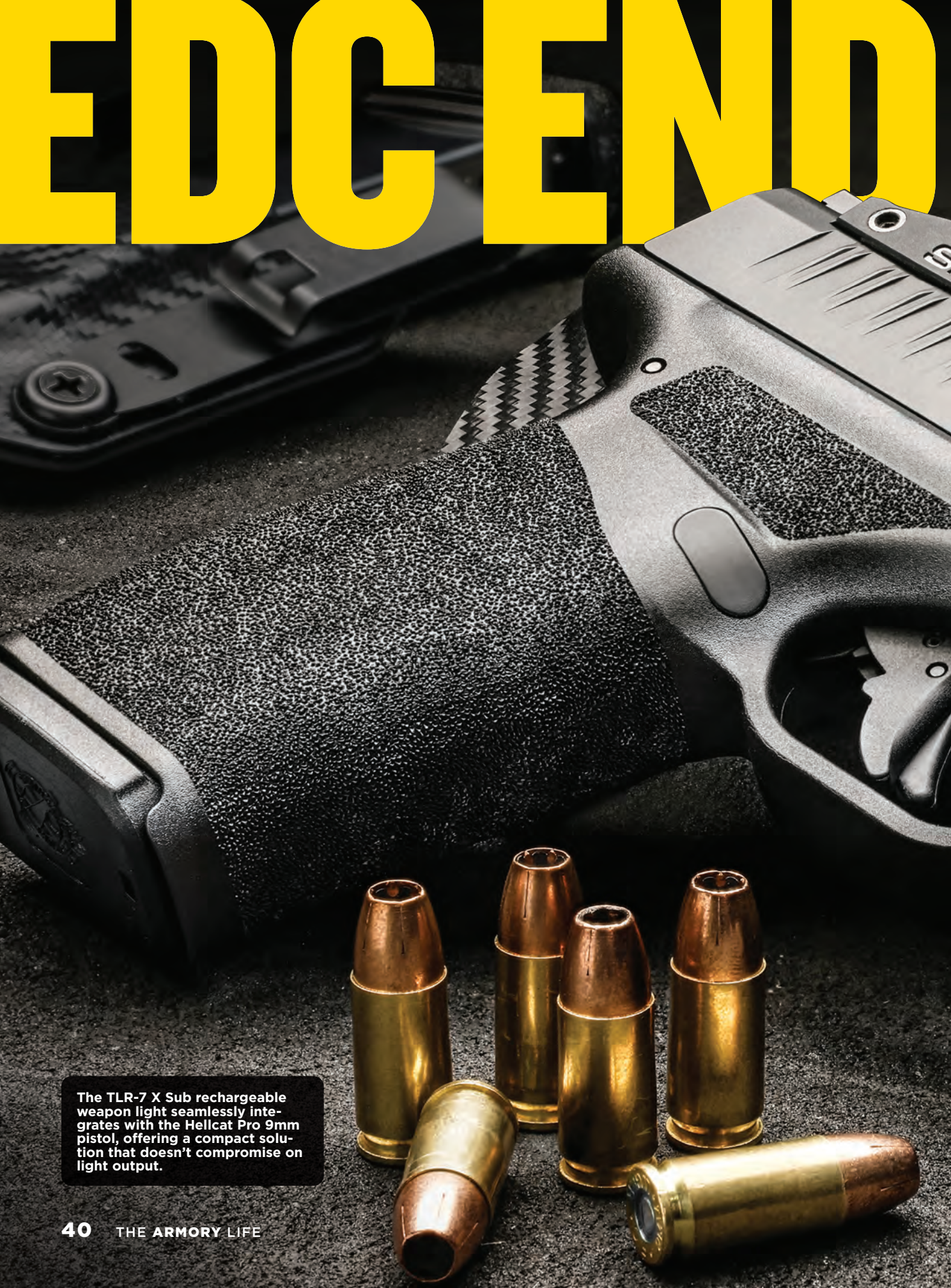
## CONCLUSION

Ultimately, in the Springfield Armory M1A Scout Squad, I found the spiritual successor to the M1 Garand and M14. Beyond question, I would say the robust M1A Scout Squad chambered in the utterly capable 7.62 NATO/.308 Win. cartridge offers shooters a Swiss army knife solution in an elegant and iconic package. I know I'm sold on it.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:**

SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM
STORE.SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM
BURRISOPTICS.COM
HORNADY.COM
LEHIGHDEFENSE.COM
REMINGTON.COM

# EDC END



The TLR-7 X Sub rechargeable weapon light seamlessly integrates with the Hellcat Pro 9mm pistol, offering a compact solution that doesn't compromise on light output.

# URANCE

## STREAMLIGHT'S MULTI-FUEL TLR-7 X SUB RECHARGEABLE GUN LIGHT DELIVERS UNSTOPPABLE 500-LUMEN ILLUMINATION.

RICHARD JOHNSON

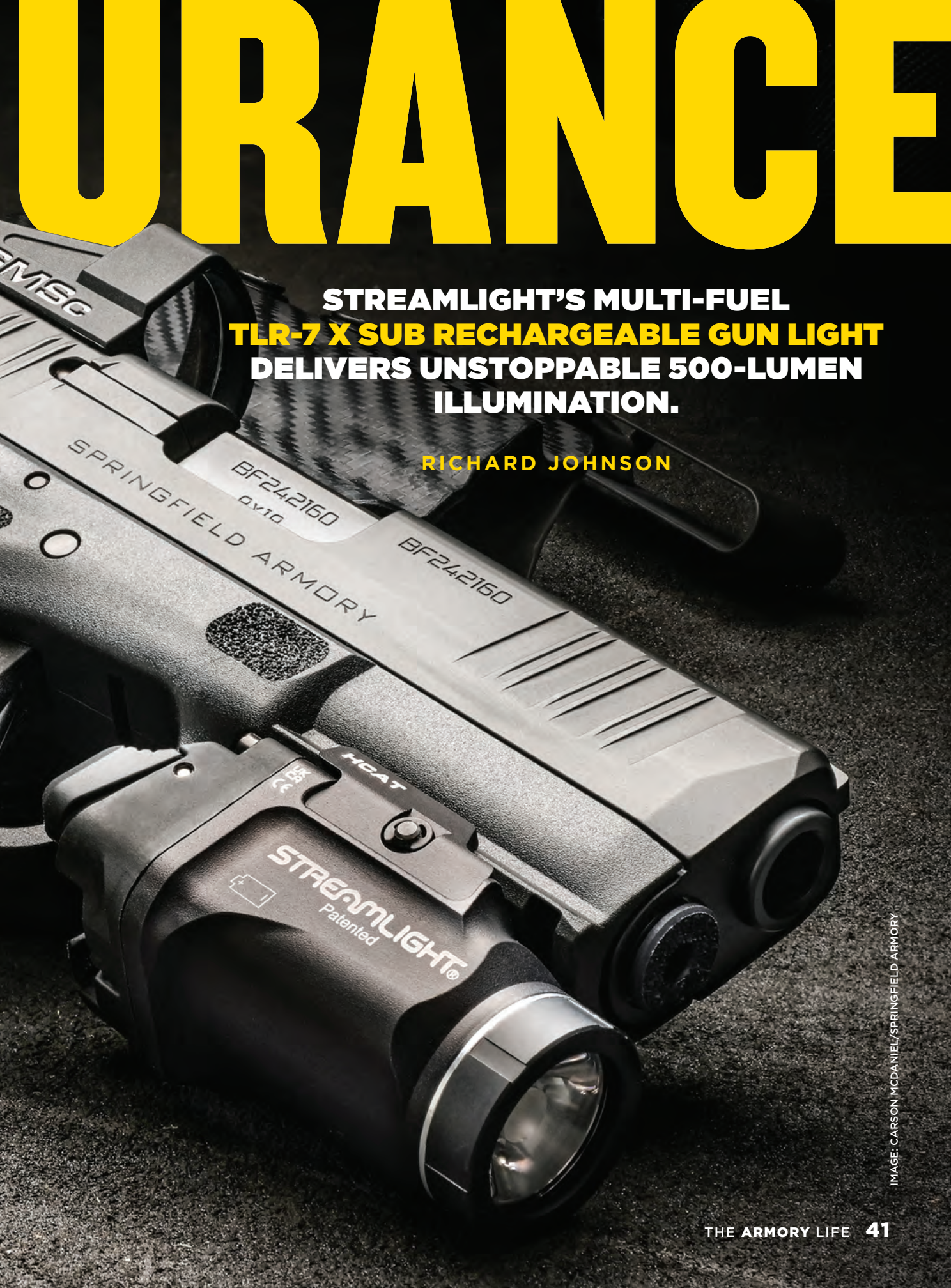



IMAGE: CARSON MCDANIEL/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY




**STREAMLIGHT** is well-known for making powerful flashlights and weapon-mounted lights. When I got started in police work, our department didn't issue flashlights. I took an off-duty job working the parking lot of the biggest bar in the county specifically to earn the cash for a Streamlight SL-20 flashlight.

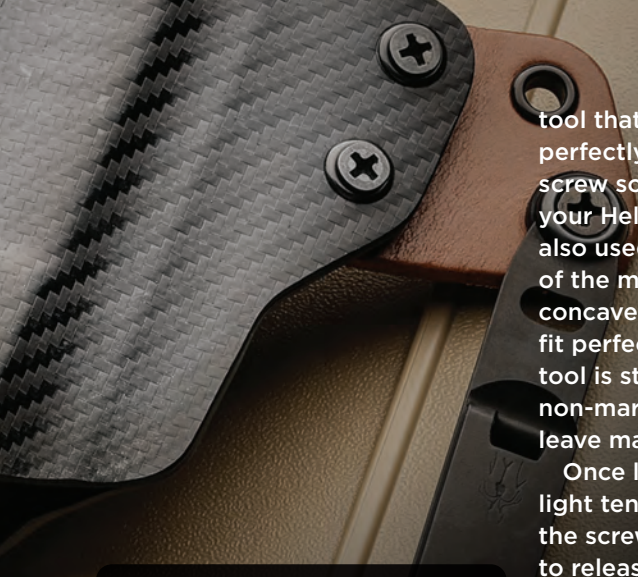
It was big, but bright — at least compared to everything else available then. It was the first, but not the last, Streamlight flashlight I purchased and carried on duty.

Today, I evaluate the Streamlight TLR-7 X Sub. It's intended for compact pistols, including Springfield Armory's Hellcat line of pistols.

A few years back, I transitioned from another brand of pistol to the Hellcat for everyday carry. When Springfield introduced the Hellcat Pro, I bought that, too. Those two Hellcat pistols cover about 99% of my concealed carry needs, and I hoped the new Streamlight would be just the thing I needed to complete my CCW package.

## WHAT IS IT?

Fundamentally, the TLR-7 X Sub is a weapon-mounted flashlight



**The compact TLR-7 X Sub is ideal for EDC. Shown with left-hand BlackPoint Tactical IWB Mini-Wing Light Mounted holster and IWB Mag Pouch.**

designed for small handguns that are equipped with an accessory rail. It is designed to be small to keep your defensive pistol compact and light. Yet, it is intended to be bright enough for addressing deadly threats.

The TLR-7 X Sub is rated for a total light output of 500 lumens and a peak beam intensity of 5,000 candelas. In common terms, the lumen measurement is a sum of all light emitted by a flashlight, while the candela is a measurement of the spot beam's brightness.

In my experience, the 500 lumens output is a lot of light with which to work. A peak beam intensity of 5,000 candelas suggests that the flashlight gives a wide beam of light that is perfectly suited for encounters at 20 yards or less.

## MOUNTING THE LIGHT

After clearing my Hellcat Pro, I mounted the light to the gun's accessory rail. It mounted easily using the same basic technique used throughout the TLR line.

On the left side of the light unit is a screwhead/tension bolt. Streamlight includes a multi-tool that fits the screwhead slot perfectly. Use this to loosen the screw so it will fit onto the rail of your Hellcat or Hellcat Pro. I've also used a U.S. quarter instead of the multi-tool. The slot is concave, which allows the coin to fit perfectly. However, the multi-tool is still encouraged as it is non-marring, and a quarter can leave marks.

Once loose, a spring retains light tension on the rails. Press the screwhead with your thumb to release the tension and attach the unit to the pistol's accessory rail. Once in place, release the pressure and the unit should be loosely fixed on the gun. Use the multi-tool to tighten the screw, and then test the unit to ensure it's secure on the gun.

## HANDS-ON

Working some room-clearing drills while the family was out of the house allowed me to see what kind of light I could expect from the emitter. As I expected, the Streamlight gave me an abundance of white light, easily filling each room I entered.

While there is an obvious hot spot to the beam at close distances, the beam quickly widens the farther from the emitter you get. In a large room, there is still a brighter center, but the spill was bright enough to positively identify everything in each corner of a room without having to shine the light directly at it.

A pair of activation switches at the rear of the unit allow you to get both momentary and constant "on" light. They are ambidextrous, allowing shooters to use whatever digit they like to activate the light. You can push forward or down on the switches to activate the light.

Streamlight includes a second, low-profile set of switches with the TLR-7 X Sub. I didn't find the normal switches caused any issues for me while carrying the gun. However, if you have any issues, the lower-profile switches can be swapped in.

## THE TORTURE TEST

I've tested more than 100 flashlights in recent years. Based on my experiences, I have become very skeptical of manufacturer claims when it comes to things like durability and output ratings. However, a handful of companies seem to be straight shooters when it comes to reporting lab data. Streamlight has been one of those companies.

**The ambidextrous switches on the TLR-7 X Sub allow for easy activation when mounted on the Hellcat Pro.**




IMAGES: CARSON MCDANIEL/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

# STREAMLIGHT TLR-7 X SUB




**The multi-fuel light can employ either the included rechargeable Streamlight SL-B9 lithium-ion battery pack (shown) or a standard CR123A lithium battery.**

IMAGE: CARSON MCDANIEL/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

During this evaluation, I found that the TLR-7 X Sub lived up to all of Streamlight's promises … and then some.

Streamlight doesn't provide any specific durability specifications such as drop test data. But I tested it anyway. I replicated the one meter impact resistance test by dropping the unit — with the battery installed — onto a cured concrete sidewalk. The drop was repeated a total of six times, once for each side and end. After each drop, I checked the function of the light. Each time, the TLR-7 X Sub worked exactly as it should.

The unit has a water-resistance rating of IPX7. This indicates that it is submersible (waterproof) to a distance of one meter for 30 minutes. So, after the drop testing, I tossed it into my pool. It sat at the bottom — slightly more than one meter in depth — for 43 minutes before I retrieved it. I could find no water intrusion into the unit, and it worked normally.

My unit proved to be as durable as I could expect, and more durable than Streamlight claimed. However, should you ever have a problem with your TLR-7 X Sub, Streamlight backs it with a limited lifetime warranty.

## BATTERY POWER

The TLR-7 X Sub is powered by the included SL-B9 battery pack. This is a rechargeable lithium-ion battery rated for 3.6 volts and 850 mAh. It has an integrated USB-C port for charging and is rated for 300 charging cycles. It does have an internal safety control circuit to prevent overcharging.

You can charge it via any standard USB connection. An indicator on the battery shines red to indicate charging. When it turns green, it has a full charge.

The multi-fuel TLR-7 X Sub light can also be powered with a standard CR-123A battery. According to Streamlight, CR-123A cells offer increased runtime when compared to the SL-B9 battery: 90 minutes for the CR-123A vs 60 minutes for the SL-B9. However, the SL-B9 offers a great economic advantage over the lifetime of the light.

Streamlight designed the battery compartment so that it is accessible from the front. In practical terms, this means you can access the battery without removing the entire unit from the pistol.

## CLOSING THOUGHTS

The TLR-7 X Sub is an outstanding light. It offers a great deal of light in a very compact package. When mounted on a Hellcat or Hellcat Pro, it does not add very much bulk or weight to the package as it weighs around a mere two and half ounces, yet it offers a blinding amount of light tuned for typical self-defense distances.

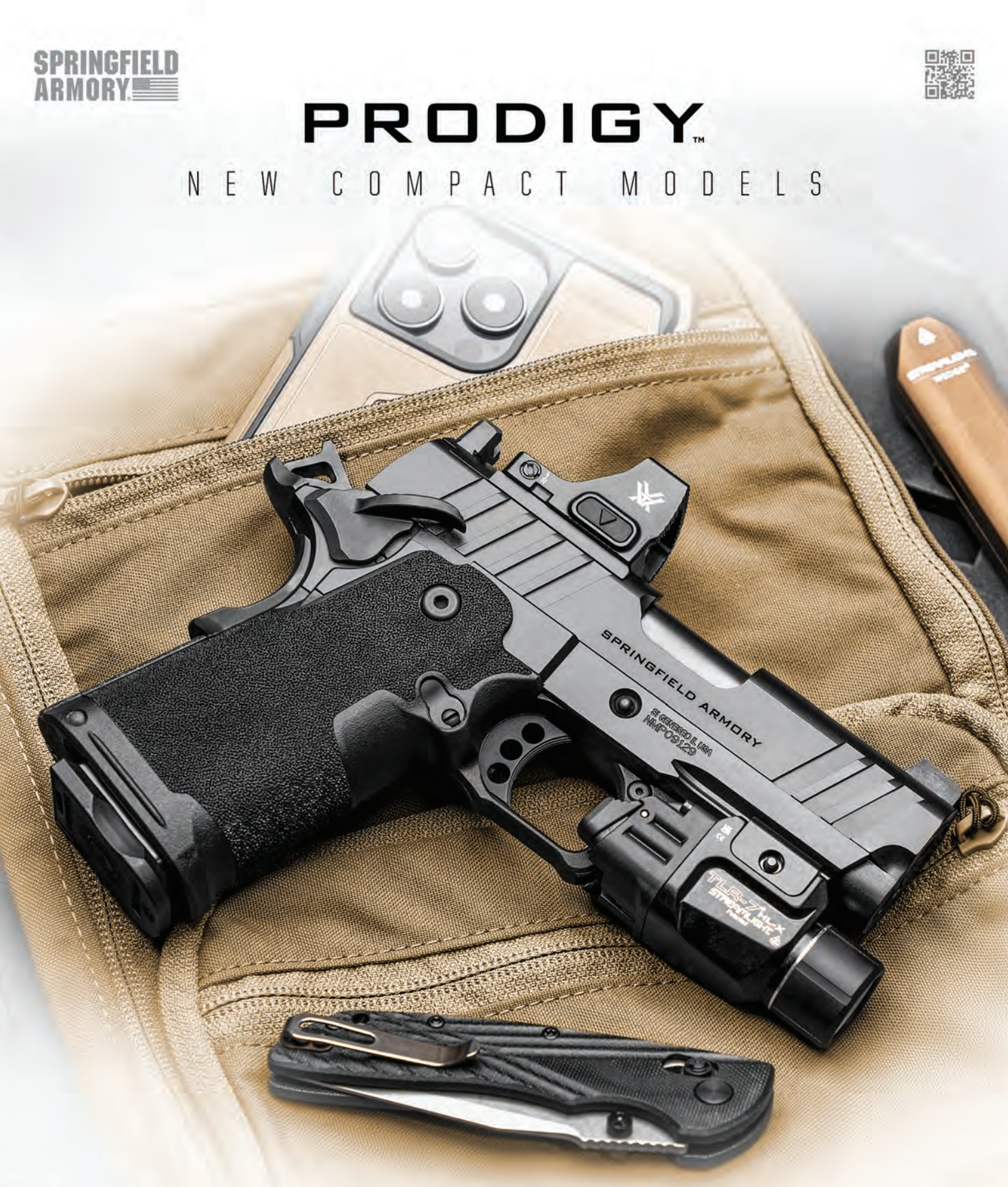
In my testing, the unit met or exceeded all of my expectations for brightness, durability and ease of use. The included rechargeable battery makes this light a no-brainer for me. It is now affixed to my daily carry Hellcat Pro and will remain there for the foreseeable future.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:**
STREAMLIGHT.COM
SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM
BLACKPOINTTACTICAL.COM

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

# PRODIGY™

## NEW COMPACT MODELS




FORGED

## 1911 DS

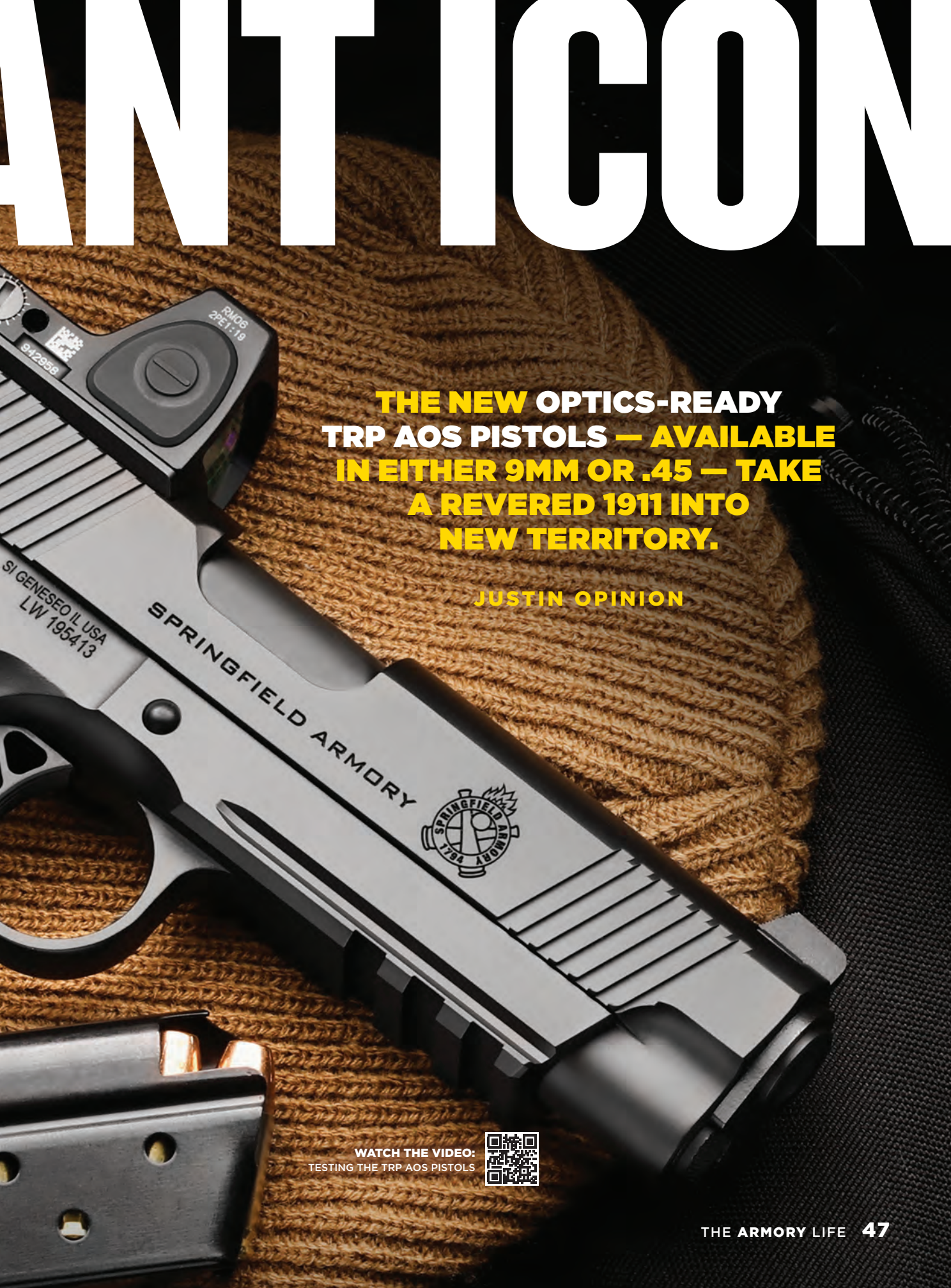
AVAILABLE WITH A 3.5" OR 4.25" DLC BULL BARREL, BUILT AROUND A 15-ROUND DOUBLE-STACK MAGAZINE.

# ASCENDA



IMAGE: CARSON MCDANIEL/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

# ANT ICON




**THE NEW OPTICS-READY TRP AOS PISTOLS — AVAILABLE IN EITHER 9MM OR .45 — TAKE A REVERED 1911 INTO NEW TERRITORY.**

JUSTIN OPINION

**WATCH THE VIDEO:**
TESTING THE TRP AOS PISTOLS

**I PURCHASED MY FIRST** Springfield Armory 1911 TRP many years ago. It was the fulfillment of a longtime desire to own that flagship pistol from Springfield — the one everyone coveted. Everyone knew that the TRP, which stands for "Tactical Response Pistol," was the 1911 to have if you were a serious shooter. While a lot of things have changed over the years, one steadfast anchor in the world of firearms has been the high quality and desirability of Springfield's 1911 TRP.

Being a company that never rests on its laurels, Springfield Armory is now introducing two exciting new features to the legendary TRP line: the addition of the Agency Optic System (AOS), and (in addition to the classic .45 chambering) the ability to own one in 9mm! Every offering in the current TRP line — short of the two "Classic" variants, for obvious reasons — is available with these two features.

As a little background, the TRP was inspired by the custom Professional 1911 pistol developed by Springfield Armory for the FBI back in the 1990's. FBI regional SWAT teams wanted a 1911 that was accurate, rugged and reliable, and the Professional was produced to fit their demanding needs. In addition, the pistol was also used by the FBI's highly respected Hostage Rescue Team (HRT). The TRP was developed to bridge the gap between the custom-grade Professional and a 1911 that had many of the features of the custom gun but at a more attainable price.

## MOVING FORWARD

In early 2024, the entire TRP line was refreshed to take the classic design and modernize it with new features. All the new pistols are built on the same solid foundation as all TRP pistols. Firstly, all pistols come with forged frames and slides, as well as forged stainless steel barrels. Also, each frame and slide is hand-selected for fit and numbered to marry them with their matching components throughout the build process.

In addition, all pistols feature Hydra G-10 grips from VZ Grips, as well as the 20-line per inch (lpi) checkering on the frontstrap for which TRP's are known. Also, all the pistols feature finely cut sighting plane serrations along the top of the slide matched up with a tritium front sight and a black serrated rear sight. And lastly, except for the Carry Contour (CC) models, all the TRP's feature two-piece extended magwells.

The 4.25" Carry Contour models are probably the most radical deviation from the original TRP line. With its abbreviated slide length and nicely bobbed grip on its forged aluminum frame, the CC model is ideal for carry and personal defense.

In all, there are eight new TRP AOS models offered in two primary configurations. One is the full-size 5" light rail variant featuring a Cerakote finish in either black or Coyote Brown, and chambered in .45 ACP or 9mm. The other is the lightweight 4.25" CC model featuring a lightweight forged aluminum frame, Cerakote finishes in either black or Coyote Brown, and is also chambered in .45 ACP or 9mm.

## AOS ON THE TRP

At first glance, very little has changed with the profile of the 1911 TRP — until you take a closer look. At that point, you will notice that the rear sight is dovetail mounted into a removable cover plate.

AOS allows virtually any red-dot optic to be easily installed on the pistol through a series of interchangeable plates with integrated rear sights. Each steel adapter plate is fitted with its own rear sight matching the one on the cover plate (serrated, with U-notch) that is dovetail mounted into the slide.




There is a pre-milled cut in the forged steel slide, complete with a large key for stability. The matching keyway in the adapter plates locks the plate onto the slide, which is cut with tight tolerances.

Each pistol comes with a cover plate that matches the original contour of the slide, and purchasers get a coupon that entitles them to purchase the plate of their choice at a discounted rate of $49. All plates are available on the Springfield Armory Store. Each plate is designed to fit a particular optic footprint, such as RMR or Holosun, etc. The integral rear sight on each AOS plate offers proper optic height and intuitive sight picture for a visible co-witness in nearly all optic configurations.

## MAKE MINE A NINE!

Forgive me if I'm burying the lead here, but the other big news on the 1911 TRP AOS is that these models are not only offered in .45, but also 9mm! Yes, I know that the 1911 is deeply associated with the big .45, but the ballistics of the 9mm round has improved so much over the years it has become the chambering of choice for many.

What I enjoy when shooting a 9mm 1911 is the reduction in recoil versus the traditional .45 ACP loads. This makes the 9mm 1911 TRP AOS a great option for those who prefer a more manageable round. This, in turn, means follow-up shots can be faster, too.

For the 9mm, Springfield has re-engineered the gun a bit to optimize the cartridge and firearm mechanics. The barrel has a fully supported ramp for both the 4.25" and 5" versions. Also, with the smaller diameter of the cartridge, the magazines for 9mm hold more than the .45 pistols – nine rounds total. The full-size .45 holds eight rounds, while the .45 CC model packs in seven in its magazine. Each pistol in .45 or 9mm comes with three magazines.




**The Agency Optic System (AOS) employed on these new TRP pistols features available swappable plates with integral rear sights, as well as the included matching cover plate with rear sight.**

IMAGE: CARSON MCDANIEL/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

## AT THE RANGE

I tested two of the new TRP AOS models extensively at the range. One was a full-size 5" railed TRP in traditional .45 ACP finished in the beautiful black Cerakote, and the other was a 9mm 4.25" CC model in the striking Coyote Brown color.

I fitted out both pistols with Trijicon RMR red-dot optics, mounted on the appropriate AOS plate. This kept my sight picture consistent between both guns.

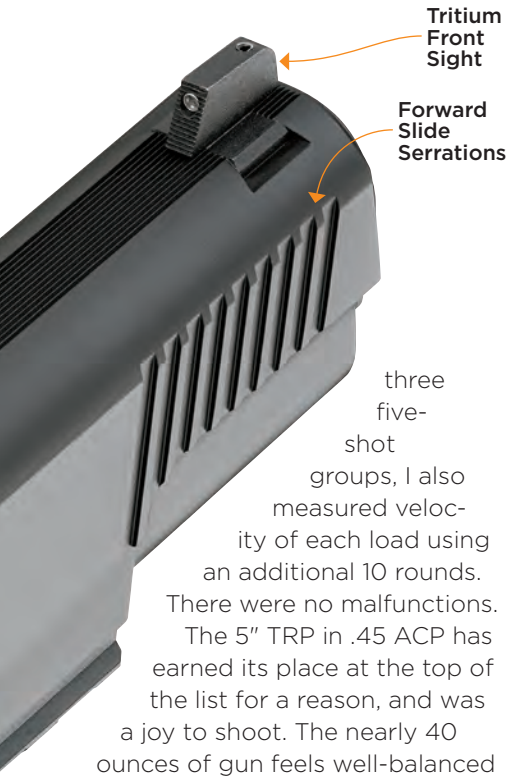
I started with the 5" .45 ACP TRP, and put a variety of loads through it – ranging from training-grade ball ammo to top-shelf self-defense loads. I fired a couple hundred rounds or more in all, with excellent performance. It immediately felt familiar to my hands, reminiscent of my old personal 1911 TRP. The big difference was that this one had an electronic sight on it! That's an advantage that wasn't even a fantasy back when I bought mine.

To test the accuracy of the 1911 TRP AOS 5" .45 ACP handgun, I shot three five-shot groups of three different loads (all high-end defense ammo) from a distance of 15 yards. I rested the gun in a CTK Precision pistol rest and made use of the Trijicon optic. Results were good, with the best group in two of the three loads coming in at under an inch. In addition to the




## 1911 TRP AOS

| | |
|---|---|
| CHAMBERING | 9mm, .45 |
| BARREL LENGTH | 4.25", 5" |
| WEIGHT | 26.3-39.2 oz. |
| OVERALL LENGTH | 7.9"-8.6" |
| SIGHTS | Tritium front dot, serrated black rear (AOS) |
| GRIPS | VZ Grips Hydra G-10 |
| ACTION | Single-action |
| FINISH | Cerakote (Black, Coyote Brown) |
| CAPACITY | 7-9+1 (three magazines included) |
| MSRP | $1,999 |






Whether you select the full-size railed 5" TRP AOS or the EDC-ready Carry Contour 4.25" TRP AOS, you will be able to easily add on the red dot of your choice.

three five-shot groups, I also measured velocity of each load using an additional 10 rounds. There were no malfunctions.

The 5" TRP in .45 ACP has earned its place at the top of the list for a reason, and was a joy to shoot. The nearly 40 ounces of gun feels well-balanced in the hand and makes the recoil feel smooth.

Next up, I performed all the same tests with the 4.25" CC TRP AOS in 9mm. I shot a higher volume of range ammo, partly as an extended test with the new caliber offering, and partly because I was just having a really good time.

The shorter pistol isn't short on the TRP features by any means. The 4.25" CC has a short G.I.-style guide rod versus the two-piece full-size guide rod of the 5" guns. It also has the bobbed grip frame shape. My hands aren't big enough to really feel that difference when shooting, but it makes a huge difference when carrying it concealed — as does the lightweight aluminum construction of the CC pistol's frame.

I shot all the same accuracy tests with the 9mm pistol as I did with the .45 ACP. Despite the shorter barrel, the results were remarkably good. The average for all the shots tested was just a hair over one inch! The best group of the day was made with Hornady Subsonic 147-gr. XTP at less than ⅜" — leaving just one ragged hole in the target. And just as with the .45 ACP gun, the performance was excellent.

## CONCLUSIONS

These two new changes to the TRP line are both highly significant. Adding optics-ready capabilities to the pistol ensures that it will continue to be the go-to choice for the demanding user well into the future.

Simultaneously, introducing the 1911 TRP AOS in 9mm is like having two front pages on the same newspaper. It's a move that makes perfect sense in a world where more people want the perfection of a high-end 1911 in the even more versatile caliber of 9mm.

I can't help feeling the AOS is a natural evolution of the classic TRP. The cover plate is done to perfection, not only matching the color of the slide, but also continuing the anti-glare serrations of the top of the slide. That's the attention to detail that one expects from the 1911 TRP, and that's exactly what Springfield Armory delivers.

## PERFORMANCE (15 YDS.)

### CARRY CONTOUR 4.25" TRP AOS 9MM

| LOAD | VELOCITY | GROUP (BEST) | GROUP (AVG.) |
|---|---|---|---|
| BLACK HILLS 100-GR. HONEYBADGER | 1,230 fps | 0.83" | 1.19" |
| HORNADY CRITICAL DEFENSE 115-GR. FTX | 1,126 fps | 0.78" | 1.04" |
| HORNADY SUBSONIC 147-GR. XTP | 959 fps | 0.37" | 1.01" |

### RAILED 5" TRP AOS .45

| LOAD | VELOCITY | GROUP (BEST) | GROUP (AVG.) |
|---|---|---|---|
| BLACK HILLS 135-GR. HONEYBADGER | 1,168 fps | 1.47" | 1.82" |
| HORNADY CRITICAL DEFENSE 185-GR. FTX | 954 fps | 0.89" | 1.31" |
| HORNADY SUBSONIC 230-GR. XTP | 864 fps | 0.99" | 1.60" |

Accuracy results for three, five-shot groups measured in inches at 15 yards from a CTK Precision pistol rest. Muzzle velocity data is the average of 10 shots measured in feet per second from 10 feet using a Competition Electronics ProChrono. Abbreviations: gr. (grain), fps (feet per second), FTX (Flex Tip eXpanding), XTP (eXtreme Terminal Performance).

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:**
SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM
STORE.SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM
BLACK-HILLS.COM
HORNADY.COM

# WELL-




**WATCH THE VIDEO:**
BUILDING A SHARPS ECHELON

# SUITED

## THE SHARPS BROS. ALUMINUM GRIP MODULE GIVES SHOOTERS AN APPEALING NEW OPTION FOR THE ECHELON 9MM.

SCOTT CONDITT




IMAGE: SHARPS BROS.

**I HAVE BEEN RUNNING** the Echelon 4.5F 9mm hard for more than a year now. With thousands of rounds through it and more range sessions under my belt than I can count, it's safe to say it has become my go-to sidearm during training.

I have told numerous friends and family that, out of the box — from its exceptional ergonomics to its overall reliability and performance — the stock gun is one of my favorite polymer-framed, striker-fired pistols. Hands down.

That being said, the fact it features the Central Operating Group serialized chassis makes customizing and changing the gun downright simple. Just pull that chassis out, and you can fit your Echelon with a new polymer grip module in a range of sizes and colors.

Up to this point, the most I had done with the grip was to change out the various backstrap size options (the pistol comes with three — small, medium and large) and apply an adhesive-textured grip enhancement from Talon Grips. Although I did appreciate the extremely aggressive feel of the grip enhancement tape, my conclusion was that the Echelon's Adaptive Grip Texture on the grip module is hard to beat for stock grips in terms of control, comfort and overall retention in hand.

I thought the pistol was about as good as it could get, until Springfield came out with a new variant: the Echelon 4.5F Comp. Featuring an integral compensator with a single port cut into the hammer-forged slide and barrel, this reduces muzzle rise and allows for faster, more accurate follow-up shots on target. I had to try it out, so I put in an order for one.

The feeling of enhanced control and being able to regain your target more smoothly and quickly is indeed noticeable with the Echelon 4.5F Comp. This seemingly small design change-up produced an immediate and significant difference for me during training, and served as an example of how such incremental design improvements can elevate an already exceptional design further.

## A NEW OPTION

If you train often and take it seriously, you know you are always looking for those incremental differences that will increase your capability when it comes to accuracy, speed and control.

As noted, the Central Operating Group of the Echelon makes the design very modular, with its extremely easy to swap out parts. This, in turn, opened the door for all sorts of grip modules and third-party options. I recently had a chance to try out one of the aftermarket options that is available on the Springfield Armory Store, and I am glad I did.

That option is the Sharps Bros. Grip Module for the Echelon. This sleek and aggressively designed grip module with separate grip panels is machined from billet 7075-T6 aluminum. It is currently offered in three variations by Sharps Bros.

There is the SBGM18 version with black aluminum grips and a Midnight Bronze Cerakote finish on the module, the all-back SBGM17 variant with an anodized black finish and black aluminum grip panels, and the SBGM16.

It is this last one I selected off the Springfield Armory Store. Pricing is $325.95. This version features a black anodized finish on the grip module, and is accented with attractive Brazilian Cherry wood grips.



## THE DETAILS

One of the first things I noticed, aside from the stunning look of this module, was that the Sharps Bros. module had a decent heft to it. Weighing in at 8 oz. with the wood panels, the aluminum grip module is roughly double the weight of the OEM polymer grip module from Springfield. But this is not a negative in my opinion. To the contrary, it would make the pistol's minimal recoil even easier to control.

However, I do want to point out that there is more to the Sharps module than simply a change in construction and materials. The Sharps Bros. module features a steeper grip angle than that of the standard Echelon polymer frame, and also has unique texturing on the front- and backstrap areas. Adding to this tactile experience is the fact that the very attractive wooden grip panels have a bordered area of checkering, with small sections of smooth wood at the top and rear of the panels.

Like the original Echelon grip module, the Sharps unit features ambidextrous tex-




The author was able to quickly and easily fit the Sharps Bros. SBGM16 Echelon Grip Module with cherry wood grips to his Echelon 4.5F Comp 9mm pistol.

tured thumb ledges forward of the takedown lever area, but with a checkered pattern. The Sharps module also features an accessory rail on the dustcover area with three cross slots, ensuring you can fit a wide range of lights and lasers easily on the pistol.

To ensure fast and effective reloads, Sharps Bros. also offers an optional 7075-T6 aluminum flared magazine funnel. As this was also available on the Springfield Armory Store, I ordered this along with the grip module. Pricing is $49.95 for the funnel.

Per the Sharps Bros. website, only use this extended magwell if you are planning a full-size 4.5F Echelon build (that uses the 17- or 20-round magazines). Without the funnel, the grip module will seat the 4.0C's shorter 15-round magazine flush.

## INSTALLATION

As noted, removing the Central Operating Group and changing out the OEM polymer grip module is very easy. After fully ensuring the pistol is clear and safe, lock the slide to the rear. Rotate the takedown lever clockwise until it rests in the vertical position, and then — while maintaining control of the slide assembly — release the slide catch and pull the slide assembly forward and off of the frame.

Remove the disassembly lever by pulling it outward halfway, then rotate it counterclockwise while pulling outward until the lever is removed.

To remove the Central Operating Group from the module, press up on the slide catch levers and push the chassis forward. Once the slide catch and chassis move forward just a little bit, press the trigger and the entire assembly should be freed up to remove it from the grip module.

To remove the magazine release, which you will re-install in the new frame, you will need to use a punch. Lucky for you, the Echelon comes with an armorer's tool built into each of the grip module's included three interchangeable backstraps. Lightly tap and push out the pin above the magazine release, and the spring, locking mechanism and magazine release button should all dislodge. The module is now disassembled.

Now it's time to install the Echelon parts in the Sharps Bros. module. I recommend installing the mag release assembly in first, as it can be very difficult to get into place if you don't do this at the front end of the process.

Place the spring into the recessed area in the module, then pass the button through the side of the module, followed by the locking mechanism on top of the spring in the center of the button. Push this mechanism down until the pin holes line up, which will allow you to reinsert the pin through those holes. Check the ambidextrous mag release by pressing the button on both sides, checking for proper release.

Now, it's time to reinsert the Central Operating Group. Insert the front of the module into the recessed grooves and press downward on the rear of the chassis.

As you press down on the Central Operating Group, depress the trigger and the chassis should slide into place.

The takedown lever holes should now be aligned with the frame. To install the takedown lever, begin by inserting it in the vertically opened position so that the angled cut on the lever is facing the trigger bar linkage. Gently rotate it back and forth while providing pressure, and it should pop back into place with just a little pressure. Line up the takedown lever with the opposite hole, and then rotate it around the thumb ledge clockwise until it reaches the horizontal position. Now, press it into place.

Rotate the takedown lever to the open position and then reinstall your slide, and lock the slide fully back with the slide lock. Next, rotate the takedown lever down and release the slide forward. You should now test the empty pistol to ensure cycling is smooth and consistent, the trig-



**The aluminum grip module added some heft to the Echelon 4.5F Comp, making its minimal recoil even easier to control.**



**The Echelon's serialized Central Operating Group houses the entire fire control assembly of the Echelon pistol.**

# IN THE WORST CONDITIONS,
# IT'S AT ITS BEST.

MRO HD




Trijicon

The Trijicon MRO® HD optic was built with a rugged design to survive in the roughest environments. We made it that way because that's what the teams on the ground count on. Plus, with a refined 2.0 MOA center dot and 68 MOA segmented circle reticle, the MRO HD puts you on target fast—even from non-standard shooting positions.

Upgrade your optic at
Trijicon.com/MROHD

Trijicon®
Brilliant Aiming Solutions™

©2025 Trijicon, Inc. | 25TRIJ18658-R25 | Trijicon.com




**The author tested the SBGM16 version of the aluminum grip module. It features cherry wood grip panels and is shown with optional magazine funnel.**

ger resets properly, and the slide locks back on an empty magazine without issue. The entire process shouldn't take you more than five minutes.

To round out the package, I installed a Streamlight TLR-1 HL. I also found that the gun with the new grip module still fit my QVO Tactical holster perfectly.

## RANGE TIME

After completing the swap-out, I hit the range with my newly enhanced Echelon in the Sharps Bros. grip module. I was really looking forward to comparing the new experience with using the OEM module.

My first impression was how "substantial" the gun felt in hand. This was not only due to the added heft, but it was the combination of the Sharps Bros. ergonomics, the added weight of the new aluminum frame, and the deeply textured sections along select portions of the frame. Additionally, the palm swell design and the textured-and-raised thumb ledges fit my hand perfectly. Thanks to the magazine funnel, inserting magazines was smooth and fast. Additionally, the magazine seated flawlessly.

Taking aim downrange and firing, I noted that the added heft of the Sharps module along with the integral compensator of the pistol made the sensation of felt recoil nearly non-existent. I spent the next hour running a few hundred rounds through the pistol, doing mag swaps and various drills. I experienced zero issues or malfunctions throughout the session.

## CONCLUSION

Shooting is a very personal experience. Everyone has their likes and dislikes, little tips and tricks, and modifications they like to show off and compare with buddies at the range. In brief, the Sharps Bros. Grip Module is a worthy enhancement to an already excellent shooting experience with the Echelon.

One of the coolest things for me about modular firearms systems like the Echelon is the ability to keep everything that runs well intact while easily modifying things such as the grip and control surfaces. The Sharps Bros. Grip Module is a great option for this. For my money, it's a great way to dress up your Echelon pistol.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:**
STORE.SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM
SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM
SHARPSBROS.COM




## NEW COVERTX

Experience a revolution in concealed carry ammunition. Built with precision, this new Jacketed Hollow Point projectile features precut serrations in the lead-alloy core, surrounded by a heavy copper jacket, engineered for precisely regulated expansion. Optimized for performance out of short barrels, but tough enough to withstand full size handgun velocities this projectile holds together perfectly and delivers unmatched performance, and the proprietary design ensures consistent expansion and terminal performance, giving you confidence in every shot.

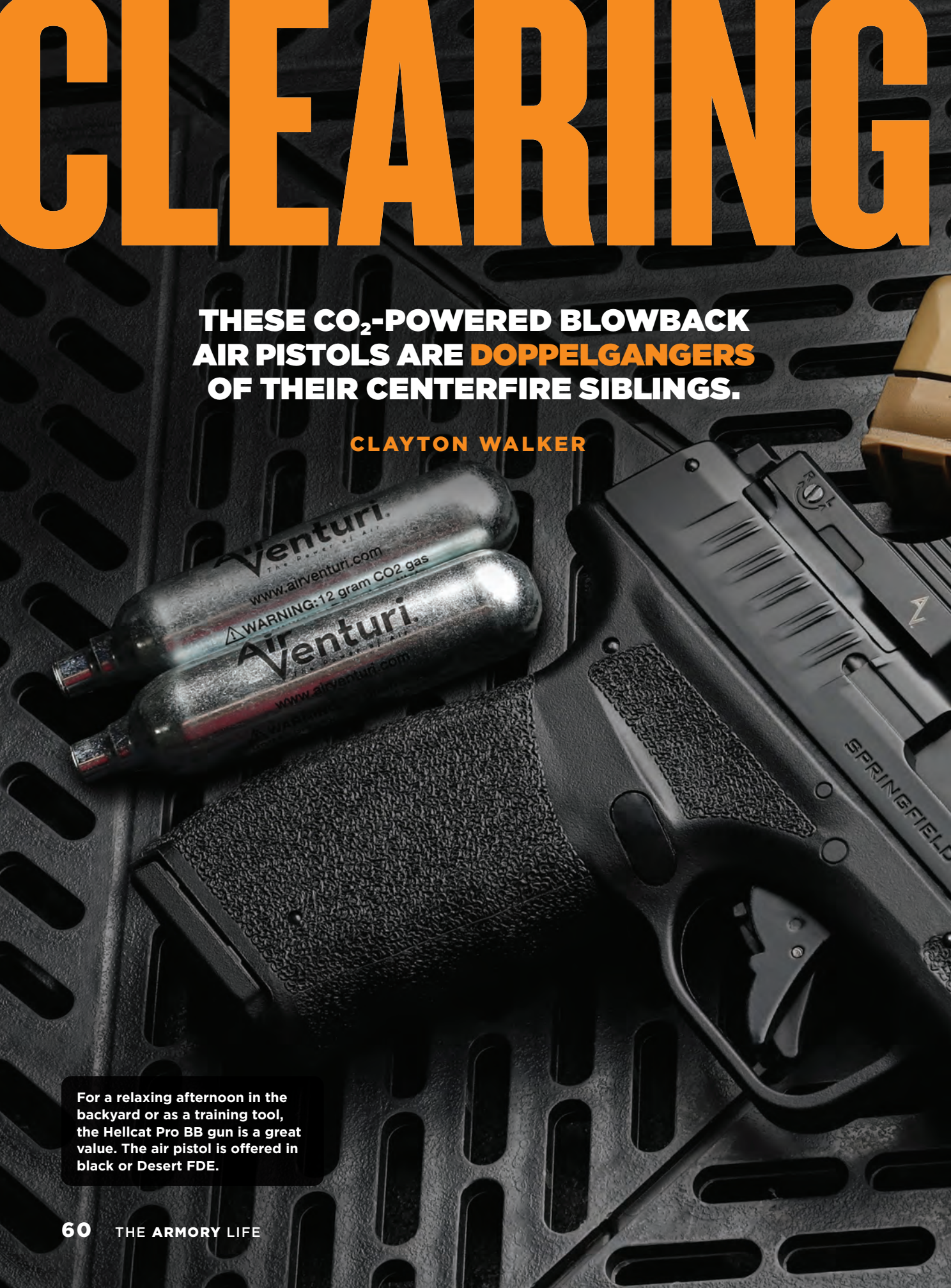
FIOCCHI

SCAN FOR MORE
FIOCCHIUSA.COM

# CLEARING

## THESE $CO_2$-POWERED BLOWBACK AIR PISTOLS ARE DOPPELGANGERS OF THEIR CENTERFIRE SIBLINGS.

CLAYTON WALKER




For a relaxing afternoon in the backyard or as a training tool, the Hellcat Pro BB gun is a great value. The air pistol is offered in black or Desert FDE.

# THE AIR




IMAGE: CARSON MCDANIEL/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

**I WOULD BET A GOOD NUMBER** of us look back on our first BB gun with fond memories and recognize it as a rite of passage — a warm handshake that welcomed us to adolescence and a new world of (fun) responsibility.

There's a good number of shooters, of course, who feel they've "outgrown" the BB gun now that they can send 9mm- and .308-sized bullets in the direction of where they want them to go. For marksman of this ilk, a BB gun is much like training wheels on a bicycle: something to be discarded once you've got your bearings. Kid's stuff, right?

Wrong, I'd argue. For proof positive of that assertion, I'd point to Springfield Armory's $CO_2$-powered, .177-cal. version of its famous Hellcat Pro, priced at just $89.99 and available on the Springfield Armory Store. Produced by Air Venturi and available in black or Desert FDE, the Hellcat Pro $CO_2$ Blowback .177 BB Air Pistol is no mere toy. Not only is this a great way to develop and perfect several elements of marksmanship, it's a next-level training tool for CCW, and especially so for owners of its big brother.

## THE DETAILS

As someone who does indeed have a Hellcat Pro in his collection, I can say for certain that from five paces away, this air pistol is quite indistinguishable from the real thing. More importantly, however, it feels like the real thing.

Like its centerfire sibling, the .177-cal. Hellcat Pro has a polymer frame along with a steel barrel and slide. For comparison, I weighed my Hellcat and its BB clone, both unloaded: the Hellcat Pro clocked in at 20.47 oz., while the BB gun has a weight of 19.82 oz. That's pretty dead on.

Sights mirror the U-Dot system of the actual Hellcat. Though the air pistol doesn't feature a tritium insert, it does have the same white outline U-notch rear with the white dot front sight. As on my 9mm Hellcat Pro, I really like these sights. They're square at the top and can be aligned for precise target work, but the dot-and-U interface allows everything to be aligned quickly at speed for not much accuracy loss.

Additionally — and this is a biggie — the .177-cal. Hellcat Pro air pistol is also red dot capable. Like its big brother, the optic plate just forward of the rear sight can be removed, and a red dot sight (RDS) made by Air Venturi can be mounted in its place. I found the unit to be eminently functional. It mounts securely, has adjustments for windage and elevation, and it even has two different brightness settings. A switch on the side is intuitive, and the unit is powered by a single CR1632 battery.

Operation of the Hellcat Pro air pistol comes from the use of readily available and inexpensive 12g $CO_2$ cartridges. The air pistol is ingeniously designed such that the backstrap hides a retractable Allen key, so you're never hunting for a tool to swap propellant in or out. The .177 Hellcat Pro air pistol will hold 17 steel BBs in its detachable magazine, and I found that each 12g powerlet was good to run several full magazines without degradation of accuracy.

Let's also talk about what's arguably the most important control on the air pistol: the trigger. Here, I'm happy to report this feels pretty similar to the actual Hellcat Pro. While the air pistol has a manual safety behind the accessory rail (unique to the air gun, and unlike its big brother), its trigger does have a hinged piece that mimics the real deal. And, like the 9mm Hellcat Pro, the air gun's trigger has a distinct "wall" after a period of travel, along with a tactile and audible reset.

Another cool thing: the air gun loads very much like its big brother. With a $CO_2$ powerlet in place and a full magazine inserted, the user pulls the slide back and releases it to ready the gun to fire. I don't think it's "chambering" a round as much as the gun is priming the trigger, but the manual of arms is familiar.

When the magazine runs empty, guess what? The slide locks back, giving the user a visual and tactile clue that the firearm must be reloaded. Press the magazine release to drop the empty mag, insert a new mag and drop the slide (either by sling-shotting the slide or via the slide release) and you're once again ready to rock and roll.

## PERFORMANCE

I think most of my thoughts in this section can be put under one general umbrella: Color me surprised!

Having dabbled with some airsoft pistols in my teens and early twenties, I was expecting the .177-cal. Hellcat Pro to follow suit as an unrifled kinda/sorta gun firing spherical projectiles. This is a kind way of saying I did not expect it to group worth a hoot. I did a lot of my accuracy testing at just five yards, figuring this was a charitable distance to test a BB pistol.

The first surprise: though neither the front nor the rear sights are adjustable, my sights on both the FDE and the black Hellcat Pro air pistols hit to point-of-aim. I don't know how Air Venturi does it, but clearly they've got their




IMAGE: CARSON MCDANIEL/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

**The Hellcat Pro $CO_2$ Blowback .177 BB Air Pistol (shown here in Desert FDE) features a detachable 17-round magazine.**

manufacturing process dialed in to make sure there's little POA/POI difference, even at indoor ranges.

This might seem like a given, but I've shot a number of fixed-sight centerfire firearms (from reputable manufacturers, no less!) that didn't hit where the sights were pointed. That a BB gun priced at $89.99 accomplished this was one more mark of quality, and one of those things that separates "tool" from "toy."

Speaking of "not a toy." From a full $CO_2$ charge, the .177-cal. Hellcat Pro will spit a BB at a velocity of 380 fps. Based on some backyard testing, that's enough energy to penetrate four pieces of corrugated cardboard. Suffice it to say that this should indeed be treated as a real firearm. Wearing eye protection is a must when operating the air gun.




IMAGE: AIR VENTURI

**Air Venturi manufactures a red dot specifically designed for the .177-cal. Hellcat Pro air pistol that proved to be easy to install.**

As for the group sizes themselves, I came away from testing impressed. As soon as I really learned how to work the trigger on the Hellcat Pro air pistol, my groups went from the size of silver dollars, then to quarters, then to dimes if I did my part. My best of a day's worth of accuracy was 10 shots into 1.2" and my best five (shot separately) into a scant 0.27".

I will also say this: Although the Hellcat Pro air pistol is not classified as a firearm, it is a remarkably gun-like thing as far as the experience goes. When a shot is discharged, the slide reciprocates backwards, and the $CO_2$ cartridge generates an audible report. Quite honestly, shooting the Hellcat Pro air pistol without ear protection generated more perceived noise than when I shoot my 9mm Hellcat with a set of foam plugs.

This, I will argue, is a good thing.

## TRAINING OPTIONS

I'll begin with the benefits to the novice and intermediate shooter.

One of my main criticisms of several dry-fire "systems" is that they omit two core components of the shooting experience: noise and recoil. Shooters will master a perfect "click" of a trigger pull that doesn't cause any disruption to the sights, then head to the range where they have to contend with a loud noise and a gun that moves in their hands. No surprise they flinch when they want their shots to count!

On the contrary, the Hellcat Pro air pistol can be employed as a firearms simulator that does something when the trigger is pulled. The sensory disruption is gentle enough not to cause even the smallest and most frail of shooters pain or discomfort, but it's on the level of firing a .22 LR pistol at the shooting range. If you're shooting purely to obtain the smallest groups possible, the air pistol is a challenging but fair teacher. It will provide its mentees with a level of stress inoculation that just isn't possible with dry-firing, laser systems or airsoft.

I'll put this into clearer terms. If you have someone you want to get into the shooting sports, this offering from Springfield Armory is a great first step. With a makeshift backstop in one's garage or backyard, you can safely teach a loved one the ABC's of shooting in a way that's fun and rewarding.

However, on the basis of

**If you've never spent much time with a quality BB gun, you might be surprised how well they can shoot. Shown is a target from the author's testing of the air pistol.**



©2025 O.F. Mossberg & Sons, Inc.

NEW ROTARY SAFETY SELECTOR

# THE EVOLUTION OF TACTICAL PUMPS.

The 590R/RM Rotary Safety Selector location allows two-sided access without breaking grip.



SCAN CODE FOR MORE INFO

## INTRODUCING THE ALL-NEW 590R™ & 590RM™ SHOTGUNS — WITH ROTARY SAFETY SELECTOR.

The 590 tactical platform has been a mainstay for generations. And these new 590R/RM pump-actions are sure to please both new users and the Mossberg faithful alike with a host new groundbreaking features. From the new-design rotary safety selector, 5-position adjustable stock, compact ergonomically-shaped forend, flat profile trigger and integrated barrel/heat shield combination – these guns are all about functionality, customization and comfort. Available in 12GA, the 590R has a magazine tube, and the 590RM has a detachable box magazine. Both are offered with standard barrels with pop-up sights or with standoff barrels. ***Let the evolution begin.***

**#50762 - 590R™**
12GA, 6+1 Capacity
18.5″ Barrel w/Integrated Heat Shield

**#50218 - 590RM™ Standoff**
12GA, 10-Round Detachable Magazine
18.5″ Standoff Barrel w/Integrated Heat Shield

**SAFETY TIP**
Store firearms securely, inaccessible to children and unauthorized users.

Consult and comply with any and all applicable federal, state, and local: laws, regulations, requirements, and/or restrictions, including but not limited to those regarding the purchase, ownership, use, transport, and carrying of a firearm. Not all products are available in all states or jurisdictions.

**Mossberg — Makers of dependable, hardworking firearms for more than a century.**

**LEARN MORE AT MOSSBERG.COM**

MOSSBERG® SINCE 1919




practice with the Hellcat Pro air pistol, you can put a real-deal .22 or 9mm in their hand later on, and they'll have a good idea of what to expect on the basis of bark and bite. The gulf between theory and practice is greatly reduced. "Oh, this is a lot like the Hellcat BB gun," they might say. Or, if you make the jump to a .22 rifle, they'll say, "The BB gun kicks more than this!"

Now, let's talk about the intermediates and experts.

I don't think it's a coincidence that Springfield Armory and Air Venturi developed a 1-to-1 scale clone with almost an identical weight and similar trigger pull to the actual Hellcat.

Where I think the Hellcat Pro .177-cal. version excels is in allowing users to address skills they may not be comfortable practicing with a "live" gun in their hand. For example: point shooting, weak-hand shooting, making a first-round hit as quickly as possible from deep concealment, and shooting on the move.

A BB gun offers up the possibility of practicing hard tasks cheaply and more often. For almost all of us, it's easier to shut our garage door than it is to drive to our local range to facilitate a practice session. We're also less apt to train if we fall into the cognitive trap of thinking it's "a waste of ammo." Consider that you can buy 2,500 BBs through the Springfield Armory Store for a mere $6.99. Who gives a hoot if your shot goes a little wide?

Prior to owning my .177-cal. Hellcat, I didn't know how accurate I was making a three-yard instinctive shot, or how fast I could get two shots into the center of an IDPA target with the gun indexed against my hip. Now I do! You'll never establish a personal baseline of these defensive skill sets unless you try, and this particular BB gun makes it easier than ever.

## CLOSING THOUGHTS

Remember, there may be stipulations with respect to where and when you can shoot even a BB gun: so naturally, you must remain in compliance with all applicable laws.

Ultimately, this air pistol exceeded my expectations of not only what a BB gun can do, but what utility it can offer. For not very much money, I think it will endear itself to you just as it did to me!

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:**
STORE.SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM

# ORGANIZED. PROTECTED. READY FOR ACTION

MTM®
CASE-GARD™
QUALITY SHOOTING SPORTS ACCESSORIES

MADE IN THE USA

## Tactical Mag Cans

**In the field, at the range, or in storage – Built for durability, designed for convenience, and trusted by professionals and enthusiasts alike.**



1911 Hangun Mags

Double Stack Handgun Mags

10/22 Extended Mags

Double Stack Handgun & AR15 Mags

AK-47 Mags

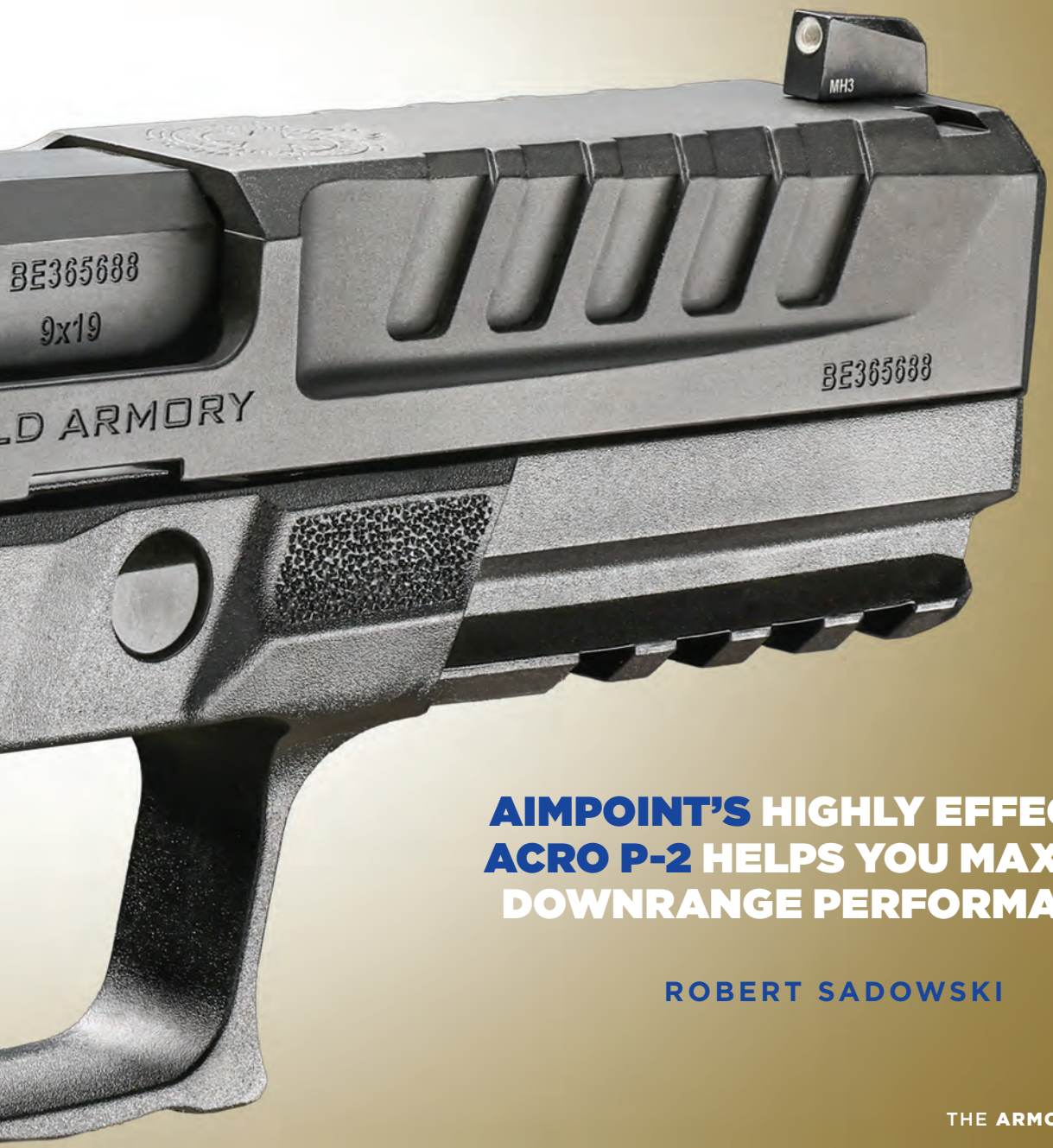
**Stop by your favorite gun shop or visit us online to learn more!**

**MTMCase-Gard.com**




IMAGE: CARSON MCDANIEL/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

# PEAK




## AIMPOINT'S HIGHLY EFFECTIVE ACRO P-2 HELPS YOU MAXIMIZE DOWNRANGE PERFORMANCE.

ROBERT SADOWSKI

**RED DOT SIGHTS have come a long way in recent years. While not that long ago they may have been bulky and fragile, the technology has advanced remarkably. The result is a wide range of micro-sized optics suitable for even the smallest of EDC firearms.**

But what about something built for a bit more rugged use, and not necessarily for the smallest handgun around? Basically, something duty grade for a duty-grade firearm? Well, Aimpoint might have just the thing, and — considering everything it offers — it most certainly is not bulky or fragile like those optics of yesteryear.

That optic is the ACRO P-2, and represents the next generation of Aimpoint's ACRO optic. The ACRO (which stands for "Advanced Compact Reflex Optic") is a fully enclosed red dot optic designed to handle the extreme forces exerted by a reciprocating pistol slide. And, as a second generation model, the P-2 employs a brighter and more efficient LED emitter powered by a larger CR2032 battery. This increased power source gives it more than five years of constant-on use, according to Aimpoint.

## WHAT IS IT?

Although it was designed primarily for handguns, I believe the ACRO P-2 is equally well-suited on a rifle or a shotgun. For this review, I tested the ACRO P-2 primarily on a Springfield Armory Echelon 4.5F 9mm pistol, but also tried it out on a SAINT Victor 9mm carbine. I wanted to get a feel for how the optic performs on both types of platforms.

Small and lightweight, the ACRO P-2 optic is — as noted — a closed-emitter sight. While an open-emitter red dot has a projecting LED (light-emitting diode) that is exposed to the elements, closed-emitter optics have the LED encased and protected inside the sight. The result is an ultra-reliable and durable design. Combine that with the 7075-T6 aluminum housing and a weight of 2.1 oz., and you have a lightweight yet rugged optic.

During my testing, I tossed it in the dirt, sprayed it with water and dropped it on the ground like I was angry with it. However, it never seemed to miss a beat. All I had to do was pick it up and use it. It simply worked. Every time.

## TOP FEATURES

Operation of the ACRO P-2 is simplicity itself. There are two "digital intensity" buttons located on the left side of the optic. By pressing the + or - buttons, you can cycle through the 10 brightness settings. The first four are night vision (NV) compatible, with settings five through 10 for daylight usage. To turn off the optic, simply press and hold in the lower button for a moment.

Battery life, running off the single included CR2032 battery, is rated at 50,000 hours on setting #6, and the battery can be changed easily without removing the optic. The quick-access battery cap is located just to the rear of the control buttons, and the optic comes with a battery cap tool.

The P-2's dot reticle size is 3.5 MOA, which is a good size for either a handgun or a rifle for use from five to 50 yards. Up close, the 3.5 MOA dot allows for fast and precise shot placement. At reasonable distances, if you had it mounted on a long gun, the 3.5 MOA dot does not obscure the target.

I like that dot brightness can be manually adjusted. Optics with dot brightness that adjusts automatically sound good and can be for certain applications, but in the brightness of an afternoon sun I want to be sure I can see the dot. The same goes for scenarios in the dark. Being able to manually adjust it gives me the control that I like.

For nighttime work, I adjusted the dot in the 5- to 6-level range. In the full brightness of the day-




**The left side of the Aimpoint ACRO P-2 features an easy access point for the battery compartment of the optic. There are also two buttons located forward of that to allow for the adjustment of the brightness of the dot.**

time, I cranked it up. I also found myself adjusting the dot's brightness lower when I placed the Echelon in the nightstand so it would be ready if I needed it at night.

I wore gloves during testing and found the buttons easy to operate with gloved hands. I found you can adjust the brightness on the fly using the thumb of your support hand if you are a right-handed shooter.

## MOUNTING THE ACRO P-2

Since the ACRO P-2 is a closed-emitter sight, it mounts differently than most open-emitter red dots. For those not familiar with the Echelon pistol, it features the Variable Interface System that allows you to fit more than 30 popular red dot optics directly to the slide. Due to the nature of the ACRO P-2's design and mounting interface, it requires an adapter plate with the Echelon — which Springfield Armory offers for sale on its webstore for $29.99.

When I mounted it to the SAINT Victor 9mm carbine, I used an Aimpoint ACRO QD mount. Once I had it on there, I used the back-up iron sight (BUIS) on the carbine to align the red dot. I noted that the ACRO co-witnessed perfectly with the BUIS.

The adjustment directions on the windage and elevation dials of the ACRO P-2 are clearly marked, so there is no guesswork. You need to use the included Torx T10 tip to make these adjustments. Personally, I'd prefer a wide slot to be able to use the rim of a cartridge to adjust the sight. However, you will likely just adjust the dot once and leave it alone, so it should not be an issue.

## THE AIMPOINT IN ACTION

I used Federal American Eagle 115-gr. FMJ ammunition in both platforms. I zeroed the ACRO P-2 on the Echelon at 25 yards using a rest and shot some five-shot groups. My best was 1.3", and my average was 1.5".




IMAGE: CARSON MCDANIEL/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

Moving to standing, I started running failure drills at 7 yards and found the first two shots to center of mass were very fast. In fact, I could easily keep them in the zone shooting at my upper limit of speed. The dot was fast to acquire for the first shot, and easy to find and pick up after recovering from the recoil for the second shot.

I will note that the ACRO P-2 is parallax-free, which means the dot is always parallel to the bore. In layman's terms, this means if you see the dot and it's on target, you can take the shot. The dot does not need to be centered inside the optic.

I decided to torture test the optic some by racking the slide using the optic against the side of the bench. I also grasped the ACRO like a handle to rack the slide. It did not faze the ACRO P-2 one bit — it continued to work exactly as it should throughout the entire range test.

After pumping a few hundred rounds through the Echelon, I checked the ACRO's clamp to see if it had loosened. It was tight.



IMAGE: AIMPOINT

## ACRO P-2

| | |
|---|---|
| **OPTIC TYPE** | Closed emitter, reflex |
| **RETICLE** | 3.5 MOA, red |
| **MAGNIFICATION** | 1X |
| **WEIGHT** | 2.1 oz. |
| **DIMENSIONS** | 1.9″ (L), 1.3″ (W), 1.2″ (H) |
| **MOUNT** | ACRO footprint |
| **BODY** | 7075-T6 aluminum, waterproof to 35 meters |
| **OPERATION** | 10 brightness settings, with four NV-compatible |
| **BATTERY/LIFE** | Single CR2032, 50,000 hours at daylight setting #6 |
| **MSRP** | $599 |

I also ran the SAINT Victor 9mm carbine with the P-2 at the range. I zeroed it at 25 yards and worked my way back out to 50. At 50 yards, the red dot nearly covered the 6″ black bullseye I was using. However, using a rest and taking advantage of the crisp, flat blade of the SAINT Victor's trigger, it was easy to squeeze out a best five-shot group that measured 1.8″. My average was 2.1″.

At 25 yards, I used a D-1 style tombstone target. It's a plain target with perforations that are difficult to see at distance. I shot this target rapid-fire, off-hand to get a feel for how the ACRO P-2 would perform without using a rest. I also shot at both 10 and 7 yards and slightly adjusted my point of aim. The ACRO provided a smooth transition between target distances, and I noticed the speed of follow-up shots was getting faster and faster the more I shot it.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

When shooting with a red dot, you don't need to go through the calculus that iron sights require. Everything is much simpler. As a result, the ACRO P-2 definitely speeds up your aim and engagement of targets. It's also extremely rugged for those times when things go sideways. It's a tool to become faster and more efficient. At an MSRP of just $599, I think it's a real steal.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:**
AIMPOINT.US
SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM
STORE.SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM
FEDERALPREMIUM.COM

**The ACRO P-2 optic proved easy to install on the Springfield Armory Echelon 4.5F pistol with the ACRO adapter plate offered by Springfield.**

IMAGE: CARSON MCDANIEL/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY




## WE ARE MASTER GRADE.

Redefining the landscape of gun tools, Real Avid sets the standard with advanced capability and professional insight, earning the trust of GUN DIYers, professional armorers and gunsmiths alike. Real Avid elevates your firearm maintenance and customization with the best tools for the job.

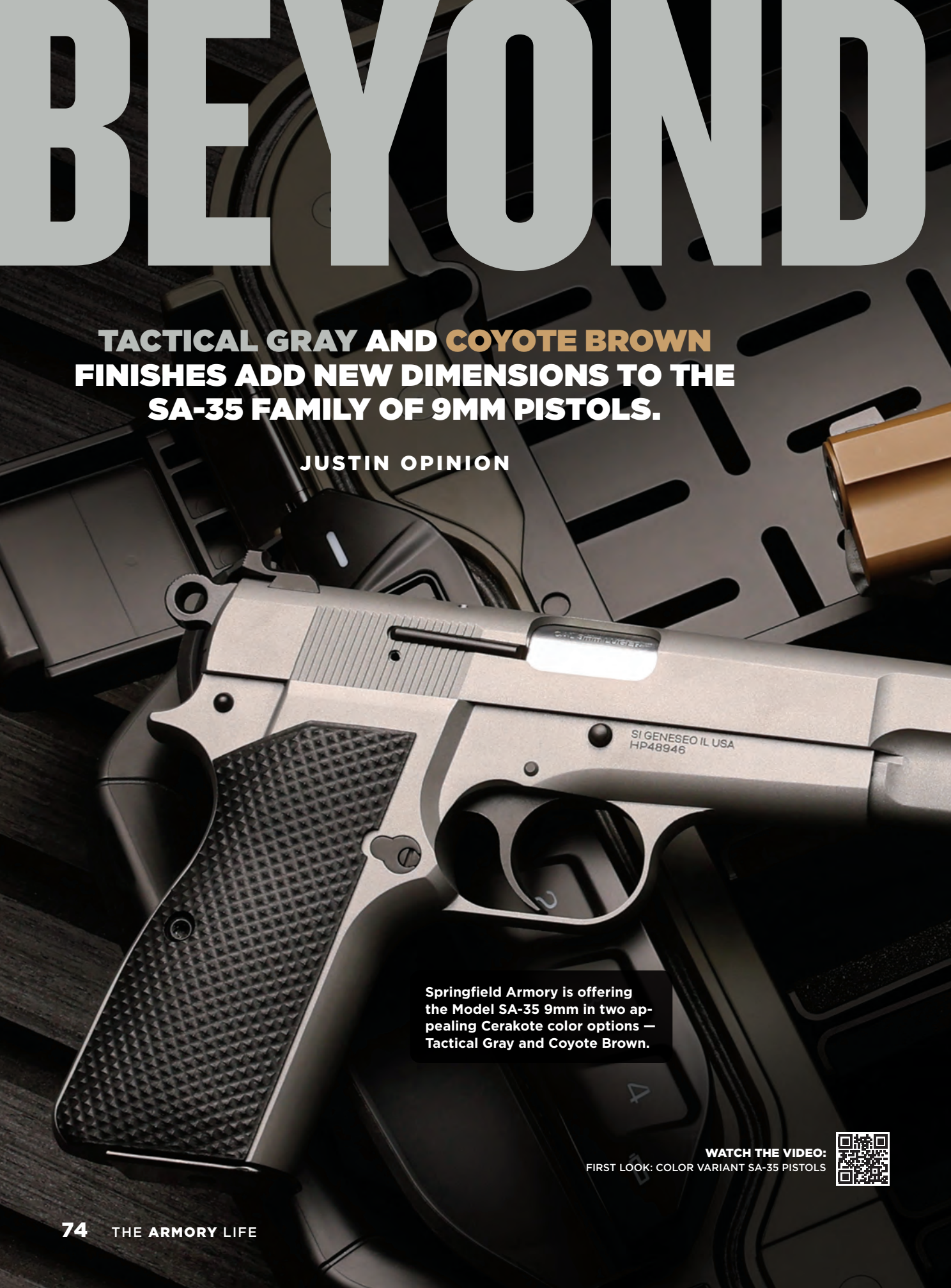
REALAVID.COM

REAL AVID

# BEYOND

## TACTICAL GRAY AND COYOTE BROWN FINISHES ADD NEW DIMENSIONS TO THE SA-35 FAMILY OF 9MM PISTOLS.

JUSTIN OPINION




Springfield Armory is offering the Model SA-35 9mm in two appealing Cerakote color options — Tactical Gray and Coyote Brown.

**WATCH THE VIDEO:**
FIRST LOOK: COLOR VARIANT SA-35 PISTOLS

# BLACK




**A FEW YEARS BACK** when the Springfield Armory SA-35 was first introduced, I was beyond eager to get my hands on one. I wanted to see the modern touches Springfield Armory had applied to the legendary John Moses Browning-designed P-35 pistol.

When I received my pistol, I wasn't disappointed. It's one of the best modern takes on a timeless design I've ever seen. Over the years, that pistol has seen thousands of rounds fed through it, all without a single malfunction. I even loaned it to Massad Ayoob one day so he could shoot a qualifier course with it. He punked me by shooting a perfect score, beating me with my own gun. But I should have expected that to happen, right?

While Springfield did a great job updating the classic design for modern shooters, the one option they left off was a radically new look. The original SA-35 hewed closely to the original, with an attractive matte finish and high-quality walnut grips. It also featured tough forged steel slides and frames, along with a cold hammer forged barrel.

The company has now launched two versions offering a new look for this proven design — Coyote Brown or Tactical Gray. These two new Cerakote finishes transform the look of the pistol, each in a different way. To me, the Coyote Brown suggests a rugged duty sidearm that represents the useful tool it was engineered to be. Additionally, the Tactical Gray finish gives the SA-35 a more sophisticated, maybe even elegant look, to my eyes. I'll talk more about these new colors in a bit, but first, some backstory on the gun itself.

IMAGE: CARSON MCDANIEL/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY




IMAGE: CARSON MCDANIEL/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

**In addition to the tough Cerakote finishes on their forged steel slides and frames, the pistols feature rugged G-10 grip panels.**

## SOURCE CODE

The SA-35 is the Springfield Armory version of the original P-35 design by John Browning, which is nearly a century old. The truth is, Browning didn't fully complete the gun before his death, so even the original gun represents a bit of a collaboration and adaptation.



The P-35 was initially designed at the request of the French military, with some basic but sensible criteria. It needed to be small enough to be a sidearm for the common soldier and officer alike, yet be powerful and effective enough to be an effective defensive tool. It was also required to have impressive capacity, well above that of all comparable — and contemporary — pistols.

The resulting 9mm semi-automatic pistol was a single-action design that was both reliable and durable. It was also very simple to maintain. Remember, at the time of the development of this pistol, Europe had just emerged from World War I where soldiers were fighting in trenches under extremely brutal conditions. Easy field-stripping for cleaning and maintenance was crucial.

## A NEW TAKE

The Springfield Armory SA-35 strikes a balance between being a respectful homage to the legendary Browning design while also giving it some important modern updates and enhancements. These include elements like a recontoured bobbed hammer to reduce the risk of "hammer bite," an extended thumb safety, modernized sights made up of a white dot front and a Tactical Rack black serrated rear, a beveled magwell, and more.

Two other notable upgrades I'd like to mention are related to the magazine. First, the SA-35 features a flush-fitting, 15-round magazine, rather than the original design's 13-rounder (although the pistol is designed to accept original ones as well).

In addition, the pistol doesn't feature the original design's magazine disconnect that prevents the pistol from firing when the magazine is removed. This design change not only brought the SA-35 in line with all of Springfield's other offerings, it also allowed for a greatly improved trigger pull.

As noted earlier, the original SA-35 was finished in a beautiful and traditional matte-black finish with deep, rich tones that befitted the era the classic design represented. In addition, the grip panels were walnut with attractive checkering. The new offerings change that up in interesting ways.

## A SLEEK LOOK

Let's start with the Tactical Gray SA-35. The Cerakote finish is not just great looking with its smooth and even texture, but durable as well. Set against the smooth, gray finish on the steel is a perfectly contrasting set of well-textured black grip panels. Featuring G-10 construction, these grips add a modern touch that complements the gray finish. Combined with the black controls, the pistol has an elegant and refined two-tone look.

Conversely, to my eyes, the Coyote Brown SA-35's "earthy" finish suggests a handgun intended for outdoor applications. Finished in Cerakote like its sibling, the finish not only looks good but is also quite protective and durable. Again, the finish contrasts against the black small parts, and the brightly polished barrel hood stands our particularly well. Like the Tactical Gray version, the Coyote Brown model also features G-10 grip panels that complement the Cerakote finish extremely well. The textured grips have a swirled, multi-color design that includes tans, browns and blacks.

Underneath those new colors is the same well-built SA-35 we all know. The 9mm handgun fits the hand with the natural ergonomics for which John Browning designs were known. It's a natural pointer that delivers great accuracy.

IMAGE: CARSON MCDANIEL/SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

## TOP OF FORM

Its all-steel construction makes the recoil of the SA-35 easily managed, and its modern sights are a great improvement over the original. Despite the double-stack magazine that holds 15 rounds, the pistol has a thin and comfortable feel in the hand, even for folks with smaller-sized paws. The single-action trigger of the SA-35 is smooth, and it has a crisp break with a reset stroke that is nicely tactile. The enlarged manual safety has an easy but definitive click, both on and off.

Perhaps the greatest appeal of the SA-35 is the elegant simplicity of the original design, to which Springfield has stayed true. When the initial P-35 was created, it was possibly the most ergonomic handgun made up to that time. While the family resemblance to the 1911 is apparent, the sleeker appearance and more gently curved and tapered lines — especially in the backstrap and at the muzzle end of the slide — are pleasing to hold and behold.

Perhaps it was the increased magazine capacity over the 1911 that pushed Browning away from the straight lines of the 1911 and his previous handguns, realizing that it might become too blocky otherwise. Whatever the reason, he left us with a pistol that was the natural evolution of his previous works, and I believe it is every bit as much a timeless beauty.




## SA-35 COLOR VARIANTS

| | |
|---|---|
| **CHAMBERING** | 9mm |
| **BARREL LENGTH** | 4.7″ |
| **WEIGHT** | 31.5 oz. |
| **OVERALL LENGTH** | 7.8″ |
| **SIGHTS** | White dot front, Tactical Rack serrated rear |
| **GRIPS** | G-10 |
| **ACTION** | Single-action |
| **FINISH** | Cerakote, Tactical Gray or Coyote Brown |
| **CAPACITY** | 15+1 (one magazine) |
| **MSRP** | $859 |

## HANDS-ON

Did I mention that they're also shooters? Some guns are just so enjoyable to shoot that I sometimes lose myself in the enjoyment. The pistols' natural pointing, tame recoil and excellent ergonomics kept me refilling the magazines over and over. In fact, while doing my range testing with the SA-35 pistols, I continued shooting after all the cameras had been turned off. I was having too much fun to quit.

Another original objective of the design was simplicity, such that it could be easily field-stripped. Mission accomplished. John Moses Browning met the challenge by reducing the number of small parts from the 1911 that are involved in takedown and reassembly, such as a barrel bushing. Additionally, the barrel has the now more modern-style lug and feed ramp configuration. The pistol's barrel is just shy of 5″ long, is cold hammer forged, and has a 9mm-friendly 1:10″ twist.

Takedown requires no tools, and you don't have to hold your tongue "just right" to have the slide in a mysterious sweet spot against spring tension while pushing out the single locking pin. The manual thumb safety serves double duty by locking the slide in the takedown position in an included second notch cut into the slide, allowing you to easily push the takedown pin through and remove the slide. The removal of the guide rod/recoil spring assembly is done in the manner of most of our modern handguns, as is the barrel, which is tilted and lifted out to the rear. The parts are few and simple, and reassembly is an easy reversal of that process.

## CONCLUSION

For me, these two new colors only further enhance the natural beauty of the SA-35 while offering a nice way to make a more personal selection. Of course, the new challenge presented by this is the question — "which one?"

My solution to such a dilemma is usually simple — one of each! The original SA-35 when I'm feeling nostalgic, the new Tactical Gray finish when I'm feeling fancy, and the new Coyote Brown when I'm feeling tactical. What's your choice?

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:**
SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM


SPRINGFIELD ARMORY
9MM
SAINT® VICTOR
PISTOL
AR-15 CAPABILITIES IN AN IDEAL CQB-STYLE PLATFORM.

# FIRE IN



Shown here is an aircraft-mounted Lewis machine gun in 1918. It's fitted to a Scarff ring and features a 97-round drum and U.S. made muzzle brake/recoil check.

# THE SKY

**HIGH ABOVE THE TRENCHES OF WORLD WAR I, THE LEWIS GUN HELPED REVOLUTIONIZE AERIAL WARFARE.**

TOM LAEMLEIN

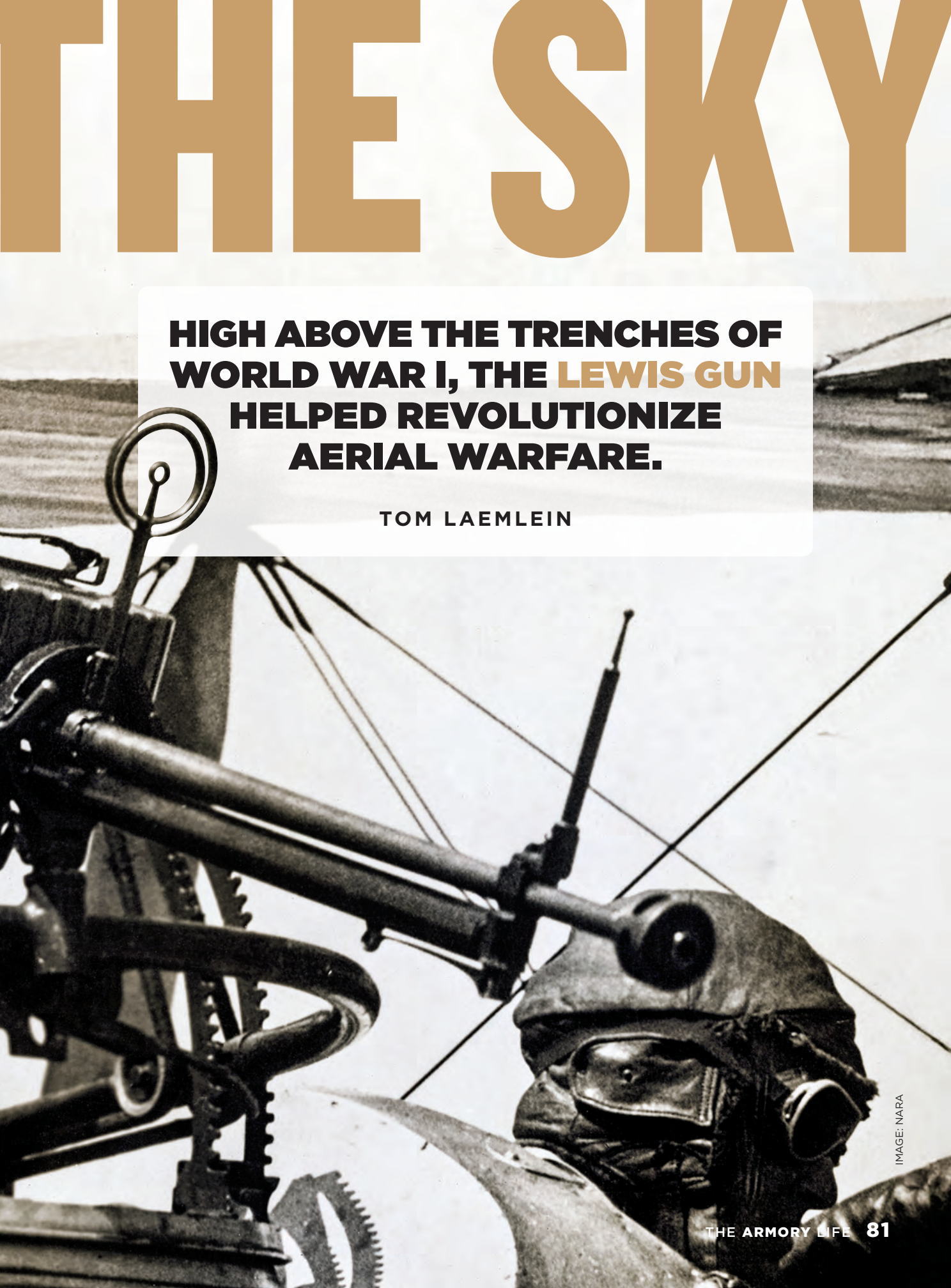


IMAGE: NARA

**WORLD WAR I** forever changed the way wars would be fought. In 1914, man had only recently taken to the skies in fragile aircraft, hurled aloft by a small engine surrounded by just wood and canvas. Many of those early "kites" were often as dangerous to their pilots as they might be to any prospective opponents.

Still, it didn't take long for gentlemanly waves and salutes between unarmed opposing pilots to give way to dropping rocks and bricks, dangling grappling hooks, and then trading pistol shots and shotgun blasts. No sooner had one man taken flight than another was committed to shooting him out of the sky. The stage was set for an aerial arms race.

## TOWARD THE FUTURE

After the Wright Brothers accomplished the first successful powered flight in 1903, interest in aeronautics grew rapidly in the United States. Various flying clubs staged events to advance flying beyond the level of just a hobby, and also to attract the interest of the American military.

In August 1910, 300 feet above the Sheepshead Bay racetrack on Long Island, New York, U.S. Army Second Lieutenant Jacob Fickel clutched a wing strut of an early pusher aircraft (piloted by aviation pioneer Glenn Curtiss) and fired four shots from a Springfield M1903 rifle at a target below. The first recorded firing of a firearm from an aircraft yielded surprisingly good results: two shots were in the bullseye.

In August 1912, America witnessed another first in military aviation. U.S. Army Colonel Isaac N. Lewis had recently created a new machine gun that was a very modern design, much lighter than most of the era, and fed by a detachable drum magazine. Lewis was a dynamic thinker, and shortly after he produced the first few examples of his now-famous gun, he envisioned using the roughly 25-lb. weapon from an aircraft.

At the U.S. Army's Pilot Training School at College Park, Maryland, Lewis' plan came to fruition. The school Commandant, Captain DeForest Chandler, offered to perform the airborne Lewis gun demonstration personally.

After a short training class from Lewis on how to handle the gun, Captain Chandler boarded a Type B Wright pusher aircraft, with Lieutenant



T. DeWitt Milling serving as pilot. A 6'×7' target made of cheesecloth was placed on some ground near the rear of the hangar.

Three passes were made from about 250 feet, with Captain Chandler firing a short burst each time. Chandler had no sight and could not see the impact of his rounds. Even so, he hit the target five times, with several strikes very close by. The next day, they tried it again (with Lt. Roy Kirkland piloting) and were rewarded with even better results: 14 hits out of 44 shots fired. Suddenly, the aircraft and the machine gun were forever joined.

## RISING UP

While much of the Great War ground combat became mired in bloody stalemate, the combatant air forces sought to get infantry machine guns out of the trenches and into the skies. It would not be easy.

Machine guns themselves were relatively new, and supplies remained limited while war industries on both sides struggled to produce them in quantity. Meanwhile, the concept of a "light" machine gun was essentially unheard of. At a time when the tiny, fragile aircraft of the era needed compact firepower, most machine guns weighed in at more than 40 lbs., even without ammunition.

Most of the infantry machine guns of World War I were water-cooled with hefty water jackets. But the heavy, belt-fed infantry machine guns had not been designed with the needs of airmen in mind. Aircrews had few worries about overheated barrels, as the ambient temperatures at altitude were often coolant enough, with the continuous airflow also a cooling factor.

At first, many of the standard infantry guns were modified by draining the water and perforating the jacket to allow the barrel to be cooled by the airflow. But guns like the Vickers machine gun or the German MG08 were belt-fed, and the early combat aircraft had little capacity for ammunition storage. Before the invention of reliable synchronization gear, the observer in the rear cockpit was the primary gunner, and most of the converted infantry guns were not workable solutions for them.

Proper air-cooled machine guns were sought out for aerial use, but they were in incredibly short supply. On the other hand, the Lewis was ready to take off.

## ENTER THE LEWIS

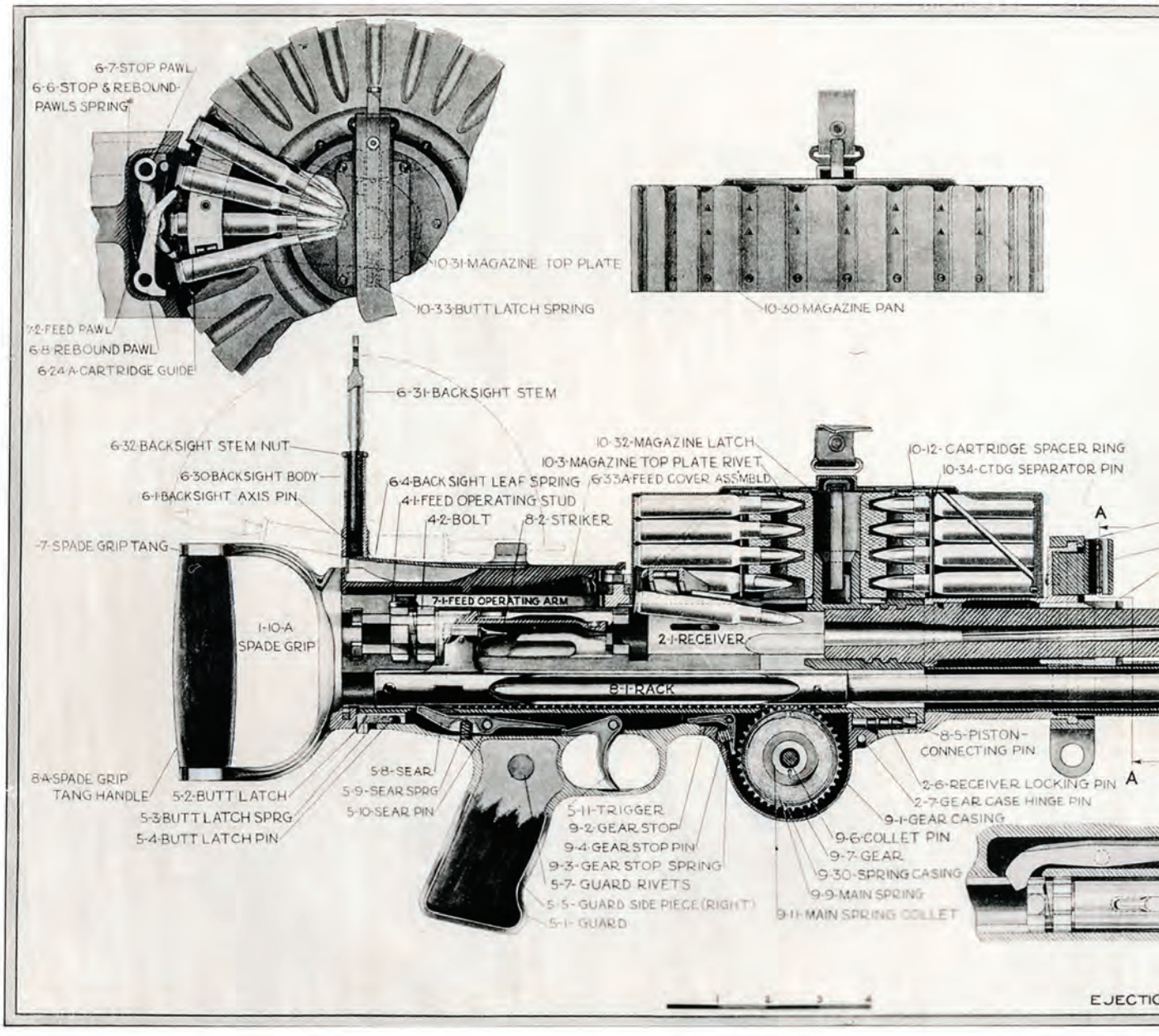
When World War I began, the Lewis gun was already being manufactured, albeit in small amounts, in England as the Mk. I. In 1915, both air and ground Lewis guns used a wooden shoulder stock, the large radiator casing, 47-round pan magazine and the same adjustable tangent sight.

However, British aircrews were busy modifying the Lewis to reduce weight and improve its usefulness in the air. While production of the Lewis ramped up significantly for the Army, the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) found itself begging to obtain the



**This Royal Aircraft Factory S.E.5 biplane featured a Lewis gun in a Foster mount on the top wing. It allowed the pilot to retract the Lewis downward to reload it.**

IMAGE: AUTHOR'S COLLECTION




guns originally allocated to them.

In 1916, the RFC received the Lewis Mk. II, an aircraft variant that standardized their earlier modifications — lightened by significantly reducing the radiator housing, swapping a spade grip for the shoulder stock and gaining a more effective aerial sight. The 47-round pan magazine would be upgraded with a 97-round drum made specifically for aircraft use.

With those changes, the Lewis gun became the most versatile aircraft gun of World War I.

## OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE MOUNTS

The Lewis gun gained great popularity in all the Allied air forces due to its tremendous versatility. It could be mounted for use as a forward-firing weapon operated by the pilot, or as a defensive gun fired by an observer or gunner.

In the early war period, Lewis guns were used as forward-firing armament in "pusher-type" aircraft with rear-mounted engines. The open front nacelle of a pusher aircraft offered the pilot or gunner a completely unrestricted field of fire.

Before the invention of effective synchronization gear to allow a machine gun to fire safely through the propeller arc, the Lewis gun provided a solution for "tractor-type" aircraft with the propeller in the front. The early mounts for tractor types used a Lewis pointing forward at an angle to fire just outside the spinning propeller. Unfortunately, this proved to be awkward.

The next innovation was to mount a Lewis gun on the top wing to fire forward above the

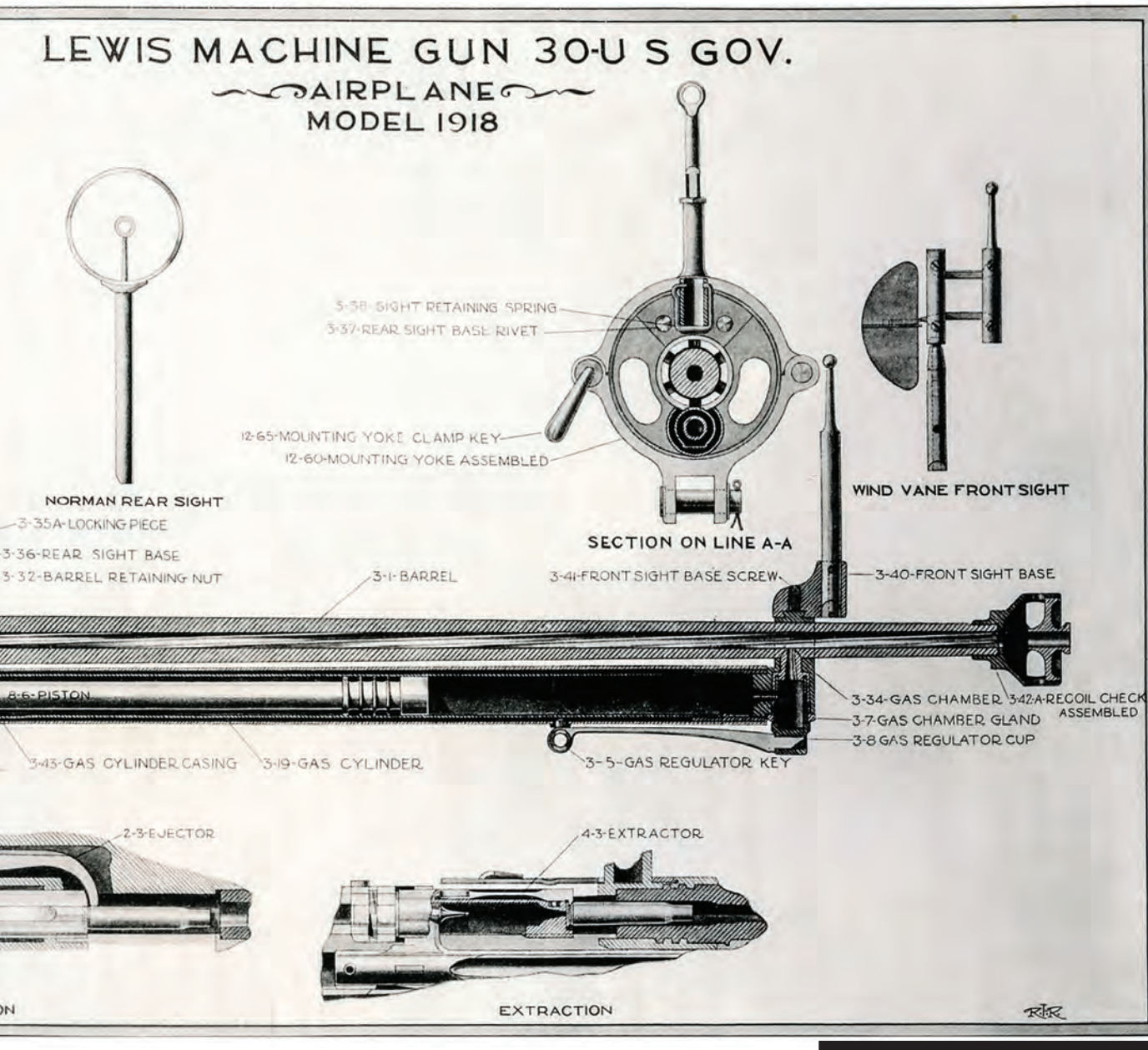



IMAGE: NARA

**Shown is a diagram of the Lewis .30 caliber Airplane Model 1918. It featured the recoil check (muzzle brake) common to the United States-manufactured guns.**

propeller. This finally gave many aircraft types an effective offensive capability — albeit one that strained pilots' abilities to the extreme. Reloading the magazine on a Lewis gun while flying and fighting required great coordination and cool nerves. Later mounts for the top wing, like the British Foster, allowed the pilot to remain seated while he retracted the Lewis to face level to reload.

Some pilots learned the complicated technique of firing the Lewis forward and upward at an angle — quite useful in an "up and under" attack on an enemy, particularly those with a rear gunner. Lewis guns were also a good addition for fighter aircraft with little space in front of the pilot, providing supplemental firepower in aircraft like the SE5a and the Nieuport 17, or the only practical armament for a tiny ship like the Nieuport 11.

For the observer/gunner, the Lewis was the best "flexible" weapon of the first air war. Compared with any other aerial gun, the Lewis was the most potent and the easiest to reload in flight. The 97-round drum offered a reasonable ammunition load for the time, and the cyclic rate was sufficient.

As the war progressed, Lewis gun mounts for observers became more sophisticated, and by 1918 many French and British observers had the option to use twin-Lewis mounts. The two-gun arrangement

proved to be rather heavy and difficult to maneuver, and many observers chose to stick with just one gun. Some American experiments arrived in Europe in time to see combat, including a useful muzzle brake as well as the "Hazelton Device," a muzzle booster that increased the cyclic rate to more than 800 rounds per minute.

In a testament to its abilities, every Allied air force in Europe used the Lewis gun. Even the Germans used them, often equipping their observers with a captured Lewis.

## THE SCARFF MOUNT

The U.S. Army Air Forces' historical study "Development of Aircraft Gun Turrets in the AAF, 1917-1944" outlined the difficulties of the observer/gunner in World War I, even when using the advanced (for the era) Scarff mount:

"The earliest WWI turrets usually consisted of circular plywood tracks slotted to carry forked machine-gun adapters riding on hardwood casters. They were cumbersome and unmanageable as the wood warped and bound with every flexing of the aircraft fuselage: and manipulation, even at the laggard air speeds of that day, was complicated by the fact that the gunner never had enough hands to perform the many operations involved in training his guns. The major objection to these early turrets, however, grew out of the difficulties encountered in bringing guns to bear on elusive aerial targets. Attacks from above left the gunner kneeling in his cockpit, while attacks from below found him climbing to his seat to sight over the plane's edge.

"The Scarff mount, with its adjustable elevation attachment counterbalanced by elastic shock cord and its backrest rotation assistor, overcame many of these difficulties. By the end of the war, Allied aircraft were using twin Lewis guns in Scarff rings perfected sufficiently to permit firing a single off-center gun without adverse slewing effect, and French manufacturers were turning out machined-aluminum turrets differentiated in type between nose and tail. But even these technical advances were recognized as unsatisfactory at the time of the Armistice, and commentators summing up the lessons of the war were specific in their warnings to the future. Officers with war experience repeatedly stressed two imperative requirements: First, to devise some means for overcoming the effects of high-speed slipstreams upon flexible guns and second, to perfect a satisfactory method of covering the lower quarter sphere behind the tail with protective gunfire."

## A CONUNDRUM

While the Lewis gun was a fine weapon, there were still many lessons to be learned before the average observer/rear gunner could use it well enough to defend his aircraft. The British and French set out to solve the problem with advanced training.

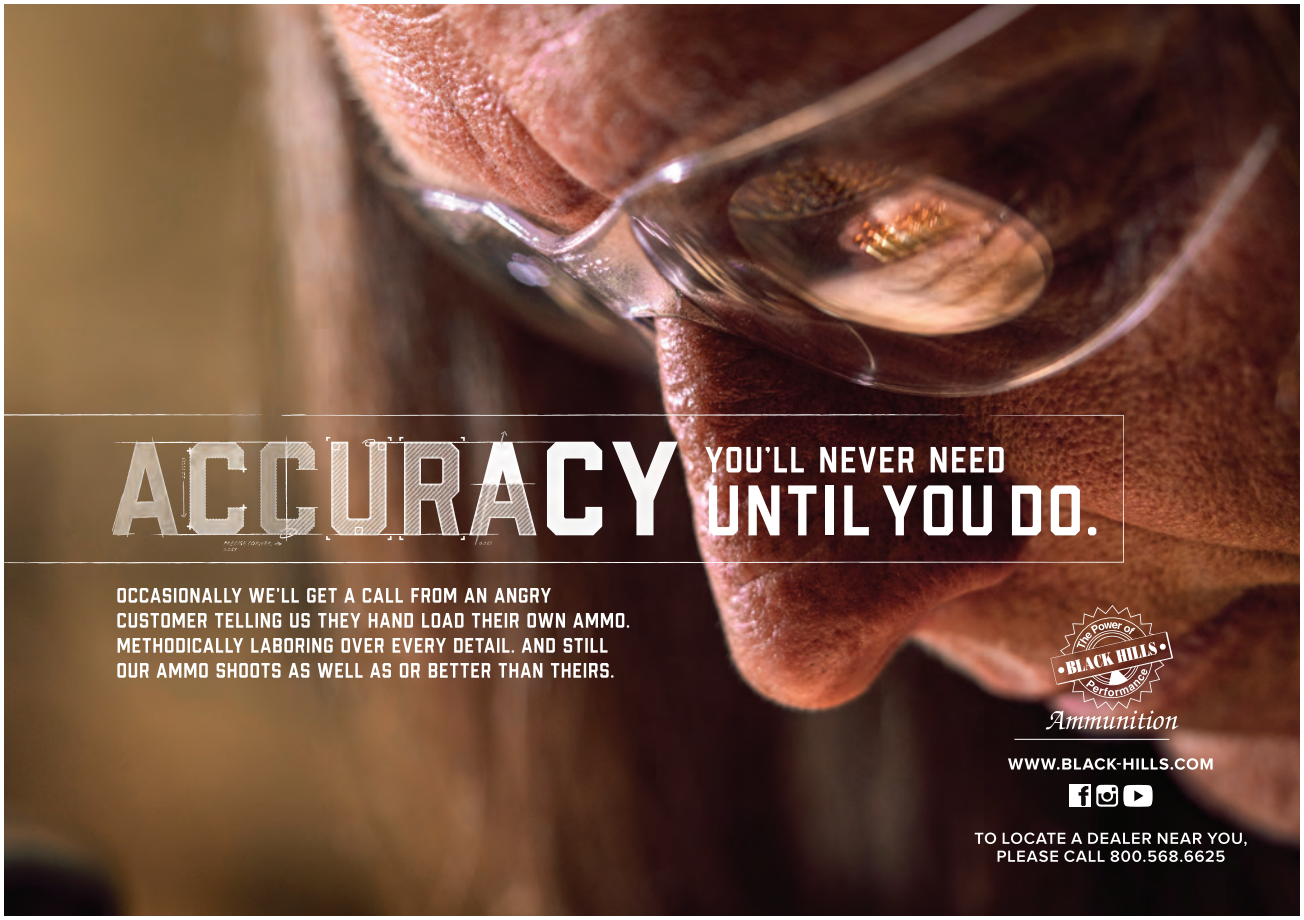
In the Royal Flying Corps' textbook of "Aerial Gunnery" (1917), the manual states:

"Difficulty of taking steady

**The Lewis was in high demand during World War I. This Lewis Mark I was mounted on a Russian Imperial Air Service Morane-Saulnier L airplane.**



IMAGE: VIKTOR KULIKOV










SHOOT RIGHT.
SHOOT RITON.

If you've been waiting to enter the world of pistol-mounted optics, the excuses are gone. Riton has a full assortment of red dot solutions. Open and closed emitters, common footprints, and prices that eliminate any excuse you have to be tied to your iron sights.

RITON
SEE THE DIFFERENCE

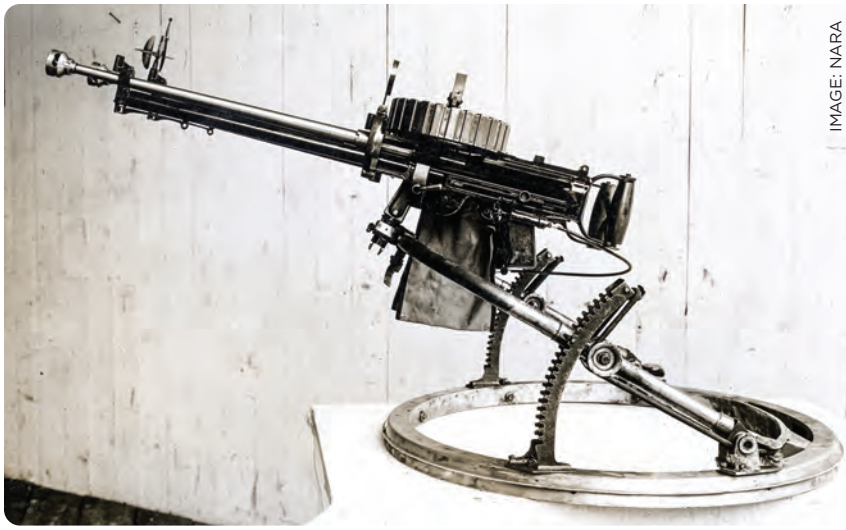


IMAGE: NARA

**A twin-gun Scarff mount is shown here. Many gunners opted for a single gun due to the reduced weight and easier maneuvering.**

aim in the air: Experience has shown that a gunner firing from an aeroplane cannot hold his gun very steadily upon a mark which is passing him, but that, even after considerable practice, he will as a rule scatter his bullets over a wide area around that mark. This is principally due to two distinct causes — the difficulty of traversing a gun steadily to follow a moving object, and to small angular movements of the aeroplane, due to unsteadiness of the air."

As to the question of practical range, the textbook advises:

"Range at which to open fire: The maximum range at which fire may be profitably opened must depend very largely on individual skill, and on such circumstances as the relative speed and aspect of the two aeroplanes. It is impossible at present to lay down anything very definite on this point, nor will it be possible until experience has been gained of the actual results obtained with the new pattern sights by men thoroughly trained in their use. Sufficient information has been obtained, however, to show that under some circumstances fire may be opened with advantage at 300 yards, but that range should rarely, if ever, be exceeded. On the other hand, at ranges of 100 yards or less the relative position of the aeroplane may be changing so rapidly that the average man cannot use his sights with any effect but must rely on maneuver and tracer bullets. For the present, therefore, observer pupils should be taught to reserve all fire to within 300 yards and to try to get in as much as possible at about 200 yards."

An American postwar evaluation of aerial gunnery concluded:

"The idea that a fighting airplane should be regarded mainly as a moving platform for a machine gun has been fully demonstrated, and it is hardly too much to say that the length of a pilot's life at the front is directly proportional to his and his observer's ability to shoot."

## CANVAS WINGS, IRON MEN

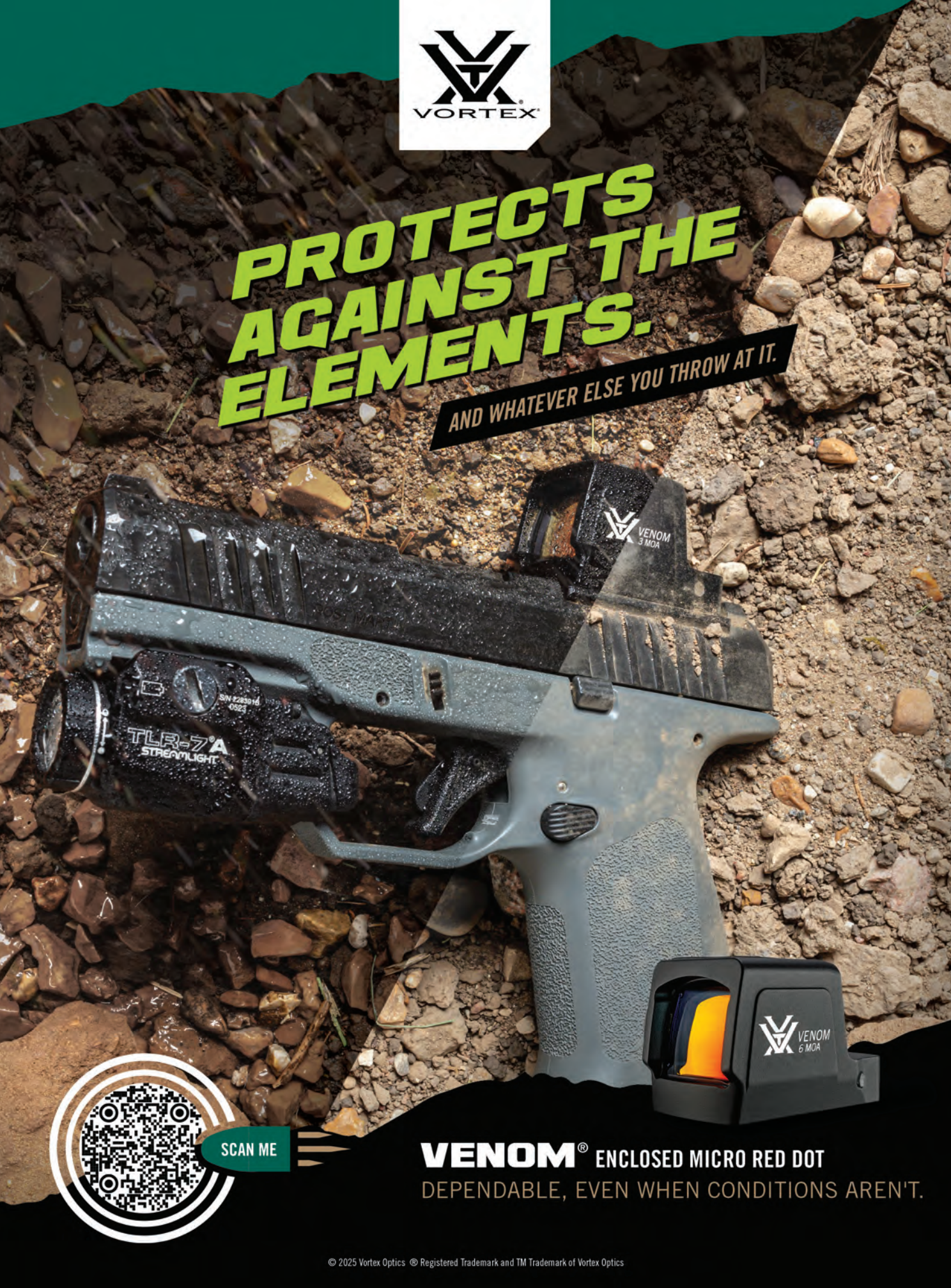
Allied airmen climbed into fragile aircraft that most of us would not even taxi in today. They fought almost exclusively without parachutes, and fought without protection against the elements, fire, gunshots or flak. Everything they learned was improvised, literally, on the fly.

Into this violent maelstrom, many of these men went with the most important and capable aerial weapon of the Great War — the Lewis gun.







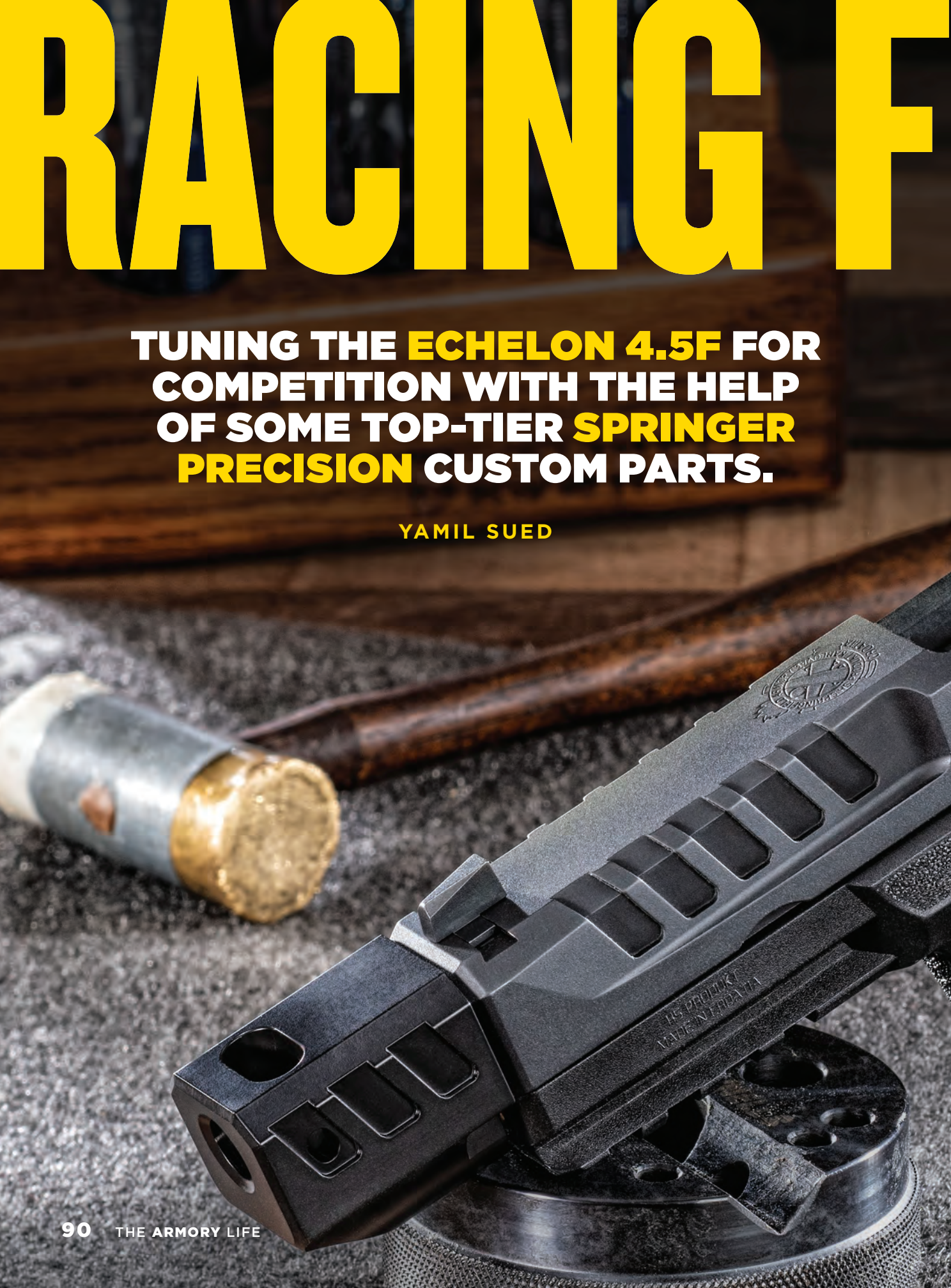



© 2025 Vortex Optics ® Registered Trademark and TM Trademark of Vortex Optics

# RACING F

## TUNING THE ECHELON 4.5F FOR COMPETITION WITH THE HELP OF SOME TOP-TIER SPRINGER PRECISION CUSTOM PARTS.

YAMIL SUED



# ORWARD




**WATCH THE VIDEO:**
SPRINGER CUSTOMIZED ECHELON 9MM

**I RECENTLY TOOK A TRIP** down memory lane to the fall of 1993, when I was doing one of my weekly range sessions at the Rio Salado Shooting Range. Something piqued my curiosity. Located next to the main range were the Practical Pistol ranges. I decided to peek in on one of their monthly events, and I was then immediately and permanently hooked on "practical shooting."

Not long after that, while visiting the late, great gunsmith Jake Kempton at the Accuracy Speaks Gunsmithing Shop at the same range, he showed me a custom Springfield Armory pistol he had built. This handcrafted beauty was chambered in 9x21mm, popular at the time for USPSA Open Division.

Back in '93, the initial investment into getting into Open Division was substantial, and with today's inflation and rising costs, Open Division can be difficult for many beginners.

## LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

What is Open Division? USPSA and Steel Challenge are two of the most exciting shooting sports out there in my opinion, and the Open divisions pretty much allow the shooter to go crazy with modifications on their pistols to make them go as fast as possible. Modifications can include optics, compensators, magazine wells, heavier guide rods, basepads and more.

In terms of getting started today, is there a way to get into one of these high-speed shooting sports without taking out a second mortgage? Fortunately, there is.

In my humble opinion, the best new pistol of 2023 was the Springfield Armory Echelon. From the day I took it out of the box, I was immediately drawn to it. This pistol provided me with anything and everything I had ever wanted in a service/full-size pistol for training, defense and, yes, competition.

But what if I wanted to be fully "race ready" with the Echelon? Fortunately for us, there is Scott Springer, the genius behind Springer Precision. Springer Precision is a leading aftermarket designer and manufacturer of parts and mods for firearms. Scott started in 2008 with Springfield Armory's XD line and since then has developed hundreds of superb parts for Springfield pistols (as well as other brands).

It didn't take Scott long to come up with custom parts for the then-new Springfield Echelon, not only for competition but also to enhance the shooting experience. As soon as Scott received an Echelon he got to work on several ideas and, before you could say "comp gun," had come up with a great selection of custom, easy-to-install parts to take it from a great pistol to a superb race-ready competition gun.



## BASEPADS

For my own Echelon, the first parts Scott sent me were basepads. Scott had created a couple of designs exclusively for the Echelon magazine. The basepads were initially manufactured in two models.

First, I want to talk about the 140mm basepad, designed with competition in mind to fit the requirements of USPSA. This magazine requires the purchase of the custom Springer magazine spring to fit the inside dimensions of the basepad. This extended 140mm basepad allows the shooter to load up to 22 rounds



**Springer's Carry/Duty Magwell works with the factory 20-round magazine extension as well as Springer's basepads and magazine extensions.**




**Working with Springer Precision, the author developed this custom competition Echelon 9mm handgun.**

in the magazine. This basepad is manufactured from aluminum and, at the time of this publication, the pads were available in gray, black and tan.

The other basepad is called the Competition basepad, and it adds about .420" in length to the magazine to help with positive mag changes during competition and training. The Competition basepad is manufactured in both aluminum and brass, which adds extra weight to aid with reloads. Even though the Competition basepad doesn't add capacity to the magazine, I've found it to be an ideal training tool.

The first batch of aluminum pads Scott sent were "in the white," meaning they were in the raw aluminum and had not yet been anodized. Scott has a lot of experience with manufacturing basepads, so after shooting hundreds of rounds, it was no surprise they ran without a single failure to function.

The brass Competition basepad has the same exact dimensions as the aluminum version, just with extra weight that helps the magazine fall freely during reloads.

## GUIDE ROD

The Echelon ships with a one-piece polymer captured guide rod assembly. This system works perfectly well, but if you want to add weight and the versatility of customizing your recoil spring to match your custom reloaded ammunition, that's where the Springer Guide Rod comes in.

The Springer Guide Rod is available in solid stainless steel. While the factory Echelon guide rod weighs approximately 5.4 grams, the Springer one weighs in at 54.5 grams. This is 10 times the weight of the factory guide rod, and it's this added weight at the front of the pistol that helps aid with controlling recoil and muzzle rise.

## MAGWELL

Magazine wells are one of those must-have features in many




**The author topped off the customized Echelon with a Leupold DeltaPoint Pro red dot optic.**

pistols to speed up reloads. Magwells really started to gain traction in the mid 80s, and nowadays they are the one accessory everyone seems to want. For the Echelon, Scott designed a sleek and wide Carry/Duty Magwell that increases the factory magwell opening to aid with reloads.

The Springer Magwell is manufactured from high-grade aluminum and is available in black, gray and tan. It attaches to the pistol via a 8-32×3/8 BHCS Torx screw. The magwell only fits the Echelon medium grip with the medium backstrap, but Scott told me that you can expect to see more options available soon.

It doesn't work with the factory Springfield Armory 17-round basepad, but it does work with the factory 20-round extension and is compatible with both Springer Precision basepads.

## COMPENSATOR

The compensator is one of those often-misunderstood tools in the shooting world. Compensators work by redirecting the gases upward to help tame both perceived recoil and muzzle flip. Scott designed his Springer Precision Shorty Compensator with a port pointing upward and two small holes on the sides to help with the overall gas venting.

From the outside, the compensator perfectly matches the aesthetics and dimensions of the Echelon slide, almost to the point that it looks like it was made at the factory. The compensator is machined from high-grade aluminum and has a matte-black finish that closely matches the slide's finish.

The compensator extends 1.35" beyond the end of the slide and was specifically designed to fit the Springfield Armory Echelon factory threaded barrel. The compensator also works with most factory ammo, though Scott recommends a 14-lb. recoil spring and the Springer Guide Rod for optimal performance.

## MY SET-UP

Scott helped me spec a pistol for competition, duty and just plain



fun. The pistol is set up with the compensator, guide rod, 14-lb. recoil spring, magwell and both basepads. As for optics, I wanted to use a Leupold DeltaPoint Pro, which is one of the sturdiest dot sights currently available on the market. Given that the factory Variable Interface System perfectly accommodates the DeltaPoint Pro, I didn't need to use one of Springer's plates.

The fit and finish of these parts are excellent thanks to Springer's attention to detail, which makes his parts just about the best on the market in my opinion.

**The Springer Precision basepads are available in two sizes, including these 140mm extensions. Shown with Federal Syntech Range 115-gr. ammunition.**




## THE TEST

I took the customized Echelon to my local indoor range, C2 Tactical in Scottsdale, Arizona, to shoot a combination of different factory ammunition loads, including Federal Syntech Range 115 grain. I spent several hours pushing this range rocket as hard as I could, shooting fast then slow, and running a few boxes of each ammo until I was out.

The results were impressive. Not only did the pistol perform flawlessly with the supplied compensator/spring/guide rod combination, but my follow-up shots were considerably faster. I was also able to move from target to target much faster. Muzzle flip was practically negligible, regardless of the ammo used. I have used several compensator designs since the early 90's, and I can say that this is one of the most effective ones I have tried — by far.

Even though I didn't have to experiment with recoil springs, I like the fact that using the Springer guide rod not only afforded me the added weight up front, but the flexibility to change springs in case I needed to tune the pistol to specific ammo.

As expected, the magwell was a breeze to install. My reloads were not only faster, but I didn't miss a single speed reload during all of my testing at the range. The only setback, for me is that I prefer the small grip frame and the small backstrap. At this moment, Springer doesn't have a product for this specific combination, but I am looking forward to when Scott offers one.



As far as the basepads go, Springer Precision basepads are never a challenge to install and I love their ergonomics. However, the brass Competition basepad is a game changer for me. I set up one specific magazine as my "drop mag" for practicing reloads.

Even though you can easily do both tactical reloads and speed reloads with the aluminum basepads, the brass basepad makes it so much easier that I have added it into the mix for my training sessions. When carrying the pistol, I will carry the lighter-weight aluminum basepad. But for competition I will definitely go for the heavier brass basepad.

At the time of this writing, Scott told me he was working on an extended and textured magazine release that would make reloads with the Echelon even easier. I also know that Scott is diligently working on several other projects to take the Echelon even further than he already has.

## CONCLUSIONS

When I ran out of ammo, I was left with the urge to get more — a lot more. That's how cool this set-up was to shoot. If you're looking to take the Springfield Armory Echelon 9mm pistol one step further, be it for competition, duty or just having a load of fun while you're at the range, I'd say you should look no further than Springer Precision.

Whether you go with just one of their products or go whole hog with all the goodies, you can't go wrong with Springer Precision for your Echelon. If you do, I think you'll find there's no better combination than Springfield Armory and Springer Precision. It certainly was great for my Echelon!

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:**
SHOP.SPRINGERPRECISION.COM
SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM
FEDERALPREMIUM.COM

# NEW PRODUCTS

## SMART-TORQ LIMITER

New from Real Avid is the Smart-Torq Adj. Limiter and X3 Driver Kit, an essential tool set for a wide range of firearms projects. MSRP is $99.99. **realavid.com**



## DXT2 PRO SIGHTS

**XS Sights' DXT2 PRO series of tritium sights is available for a range of Springfield Armory polymer-framed pistols. MSRP is $153.99. xssights.com**



## STICKER PACK

This nine-pack of Springfield Armory-themed vinyl stickers is great for showcasing your Second Amendment bona fides. Price is $9.99. **store.springfield-armory.com**




## POCKET TEE

**The Custom Heavyweight Pocket Tee, featuring Springfield Armory branding, is made from 100% heavyweight combed cotton. Price is $29.99. store.springfield-armory.com**



## SHOOTING MAT

The water-resistant Springfield Armory Shooting Mat features a carry handle and over-the-shoulder sling. Price is $84.99. **store.springfield-armory.com**






# THE ALL NEW
# BANISH 30 V2
## 3D PRINTED TITANIUM SUPPRESSOR

Versatile and modular, the BANISH 30-V2 is tough to beat. Suppressing anything from .17 and .22 rimfire rounds to 30-caliber magnums, the BANISH 30-V2 is the definition of do-it-all utility. Better still, it can be run in long and short configurations, ensuring its the perfect fit for any ballistic pursuit. On the range or in the field, the BANISH 30-V2 just works, reducing report to hearing safe.

TO GET STARTED
CALL 866-485-7643 OR
VISIT SILENCERCENTRAL.COM


ECHELON™
COMP
ECHELON
SURGEFIRE
INTEGRAL
COMPENSATOR
SPRINGFIELD ARMORY
SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM