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PISTOL-CALIBER CARBINES

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2015 GUNS OF THE YEAR

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GLIMMERS OF HOPE ON GUN RIGHTS

There's been a lot of positive-trending news on how the gun-rights debate, despite setbacks, may be shifting our way. First, we took note of a recent Gallup poll that showed 58% in the U.S. have a favorable opinion of the NRA.

This comes despite gun prohibitionists blaming NRA for illegal uses of firearms, constant media criticism, and attacks by politicians. I credit the NRA for helping stop many ill-advised and possibly unconstitutional laws across the country. Apparently, many citizens agree. In a Gallup poll from Oct. 7-11, a solid majority of Americans (58%) say they have an overall favorable impression of the NRA. According to the Gallup article on the poll, "This includes the highest recording of 'very favorable' opinions (26%) since Gallup began asking this question in 1989."

That's because normal people don't blame the gun-civil-rights group for crimes committed with firearms — most people blame the criminals instead. What a novel idea.

(Full disclosure: I was an NRA annual member for many years while I was competing in NRA shooting events, and I became a life member a couple of years ago. There is no business association between GUN TESTS, NRA, and me personally, other than my individual membership.)

Next, legislation that would remove suppressors and silencers from National Firearms Act regs and treat them as regular firearms has been proposed by U.S. Rep. Matt Salmon, R-Ariz (AZ-05). This legislation (H.R. 3799) will remove suppressors from the purview of the National Firearms Act (NFA), replacing the federal transfer process with an instantaneous NICS background check. The act also includes a provision to refund the \$200 transfer tax to applicants who purchase a suppressor after October 22, 2015. It is currently legal to hunt with a suppressor in 37 states. Forty-one states allow private ownership of suppressors.

"The American Suppressor Association believes that citizens should not have to pay a tax to protect their hearing while exercising their Second Amendment rights," said Knox Williams, president and executive Director of the American Suppressor Association (ASA).

Also, according to a recent Pew Research Center study, the annual rate of firearm-related homicides in America declined by nearly 50 percent between 1993 and 2013. According to a Pew Research Center analysis of death certificate data collected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the gun homicide rate dropped by nearly half, from 7 per 100,000 Americans in 1993 to 3.6 per 100,000 in 2013.

During this same span, gun sales of all types have skyrocketed, as have the number of concealed-carry permit holders, which now number more than 12.8 million permit holders in 2015, according to the Crime Prevention Research Center. Clearly, the Pew data show that during a doubling (or more) in the ownership of privately held guns, firearms-related homicides plunged. More guns don't equal more crime, it seems. **GT**



Todd Woodard

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The State Registry Problem

Reader John S. took our list of 380 ACPs to his local gun store in the Golden State, but his results were far from golden. And, it turns out that Mare's Leg pistols are legal for sale in California.

Re "Gun Tests Value Guide: Recent 380 ACP Pistol Grades," October 2015

Could you add one line to your firearms specification box with something about being a certain gun being "Calyforny" legal? I took your 380 pocket pistol recommendations to two different gun stores and found almost none of them were legal for sale here! I felt like an idiot! I did see in the current issue that you mentioned the Mare's Legs were not legal here. So I know you can do it! So, please, add this little footnote.

Also, what about the new Remington R380? I want a small pocket pistol, but with more power than my 100-year-old Baby Colt. Plus, it would nice not to have a slide spring that is so powerful that I cannot pull the slide back! It is tough being an old fart.

I became so upset over the lack of small pocket pistols for wearing in the summer that I just kept my little Baby Colt in 25 ACP. *Ja*, I know it is not powerful enough to stop a gun fight — I was a deputy sheriff for 27 years. But now I am 71, and carrying around some big old 9mm when you are wearing shorts just doesn't seem proper. It is better than a hammer!

— **John S.**

Hey John: I understand the problem. The California registry changes so much, plus there are other states with different lists, so I hesitate to commit to that. When the manufacturer lists a model as being state compliant, or not, we can add that data with some confidence. But when the companies themselves don't list compliance, that puts us in a spot of having to chase all the restrictive states' registries. See the next letter as an example of some of the problems. — Todd Woodard

GUN TESTS VALUE GUIDE: RECENT 380 ACP PISTOL GRADES		
GUN NAME	DATE	GRADE & COMMENTS
Kohler Micro-Drop Automatic Revolver 380 ACP, 6796	Sept 2015	Grade B: The revolver was well finished and demonstrated excellent reliability and accuracy.
Ruger LCP-IV 380 ACP, 8099	Jan 2014	Grade A: Replaced the magazine, but to be the pistol without using the laser was a fail.
Ruger LCR90 No. 8216 380 Auto, 8460	June 2013	Grade A: The LCR90 offers better ergonomics than many smaller 380s.
Taurus 7200 380 Auto, 8336	Jan 2013	Grade A: This inexpensive no-compromise fully gal offered great control in our action tests.
Ruger LCP 380 ACP, 8379	July 2013	Grade B: The LCP performed well in our action tests but it is the right size for the right person.
Ruger LCP-III No. 0739 380 Auto, 8466	July 2013	Grade B: The LCP-III was easily concealed, great, we should've made the laser red with one hand.
Browning Shock Pistol 540L380 380 ACP, 8480	Sept 2015	Grade B: The Browning is a reliable handgun with better operation, less accuracy than the smaller Glock.
Smith & Wesson 380 ACP Subcompact Model, 8480	Nov 2014	Grade B: With a Wilson green case it is a nice backup for the grade to an S&W and certainly top it.
S&W Redwood 380 12880 380 ACP, 8482	Sept 2013	Grade B: The Redwood had the best integrated heat sink of all the models tested, and it was easy to turn on.
Kyle CW 380 380 ACP No. 8481, 8482	Nov 2014	Grade A: The Kyle's has the right, fire after 1000 or the long DAG trigger pull.
S&W K&R 380 380 ACP No. 8483, 8484, 8485	July 2013	Grade B: S&W's attention to the P&B for its trigger and user attention.
Old Hickory 380 380 ACP No. 8486, 8487	Nov 2014	Grade A: This case a lot of money, and there are many pistols that work better for the money.
S&W K&R 380 380 ACP No. 8488, 8489	Nov 2014	Grade B: The control set should have produced a B&B for the best, but the movement trigger and additional accuracy.

Log on to Gun-Tests.com to read complete reviews of these products.

Re "Two Mare's Legs from Henry And Rossi: Expensive Novelties," November 2015

I see in your article on the Mare's Legs that you mentioned these

pistols are banned in California. This statement is not true. I am the manager of a gun store in California and often contact the California Department of Justice to check on issues such as this. The 2015 Henry catalog does state that this gun is not available in California. However, since we stock them for sale, and they are available through our distributors, I had concerns and contacted DOJ for clarification. Our field rep for DOJ had (coincidentally) just visited the Henry manufacturing plant and was current on the regs for this pistol. The Mare's Leg pistol is legal to sell in California. The confusion may stem from the fact that this pistol is not on the California Roster of approved handguns. The Mare's Leg

GUN TESTS REPORT CARD GRADING

Gun Tests Grade: A

A gun with this rating functions perfectly, shoots accurately, and exhibits comfortable, easy use for its owner. We may prefer one gun over others based on its unusual accuracy, superior performance, unusual features, or nice cosmetics. We recognize such a gun for these traits without regard to its cost.

Gun Tests Grade: B

We give this ranking to a gun that functions appropriately for its category, but which might not do as well in major areas as an **A**-ranked gun.

Gun Tests Grade: C

We may have reservations about some aspect of a gun's performance or pricing. We express those reservations so the reader can balance our concerns with his or her needs.

Gun Tests Grade: D

Some aspect of a gun's performance — in particular, safety, function, or accuracy — doesn't meet our standards and isn't easily resolved.

Gun Tests Grade: F

Some aspect of a gun's performance is dangerous, inappropriate for the category, or is likely to fail.

FIRING LINE



pistol is not on the roster because it is exempt, as it is a single-action pistol. Hope this info helps.

—**Debbie Morrisset**
Manager B&G Guns
Oxnard, California

Thank you for the update. — tw

Re “Handgun Bullets: How Do They Penetrate in Home Materials?” November 2015

Just finished the handgun penetration article. I feel strongly that one additional cartridge should have been included: The 38/357-caliber wadcutter. The article concerns penetration in home construction materials. I am sure that a high percentage of your subscribers keep a loaded firearm in their homes for protection — me too. So it’s a excellent and very appropriate article and well done!

I now live in Mesa, Arizona. I used to live in Vermont, where “real” craftsmen still make high-quality homes with quality materials. My closest neighbor was 100 yards away.

The problem here in Mesa is that the “development style” single-family housing is built by whatever contractors bids the lowest. Also, the

normal wall construction consists of 3x4 studs, 3/8-inch-thick sheet rock, an air gap, some insulation, a thin sheet of Styrofoam, chicken wire, and then stucco. Most of the developers want to keep the prices low to keep selling more houses. Also, there are houses all around mine.

So when you think about it, the wall construction here is very poor for stopping any ammunition. Hell, I think a decent air rifle would make it though! Also, the homes are spaced as close as 20 feet apart. Depending on which direction I fired, say through my bedroom wall on the edge of my house and into the outside walls of my neighbors’ houses and into their bedrooms, that’s a calamity waiting to happen!

The other concern is that my home has 26 windows and a wide sliding-glass door, all on a single-level ranch house. Because of the percentage of glass windows in exterior wall structures, it’s all the more important to choose ammo very carefully.

My solution was to use my first carry piece, a Model 60 Smith & Wesson revolver chambered in 38 Special/357 Magnum. Because of all the reasons I list above, I chose to use 38 Special wadcutters in it. Yes, I know they were designed to make nice little round holes for paper target



shooting, but with the flat bullet and low powder charge, my thought was the penetration would be lower.

So thanks for reading this, hope it will stir up lots more thinking, and I would love to hear your thoughts.

— **Jack C.**

More Snubbies

As I have told you before, I love GUN TESTS. I always read it from cover to cover the same day I receive it. There is almost nothing you could do to improve the magazine. Please keep up the great work! I do have one gripe, though, only one. As I told you once before, you hardly ever test snubby revolvers in 9mm and 38 Special calibers. I would really appreciate you testing a lot of them, because there are so many makes and models out there. Of course, I mean revolvers with barrel lengths around 2 inches or a little less. If you have previously determined there just isn’t enough interest in these to test more, please let me know that so I can stop bugging you. On the other hand, you might choose to invite comments in your Downrange section of the magazine, to see if sufficient interest is out there.

— **Phil B.**

Hey Phil: We have done quite a lot of snubby testing over the years, and the issue is, those models don’t change very much. But on page 31 of this issue, I included a Value Guide of several snubby chamberings we’ve tested for your reference. Most are still in production with very little change. Hope that helps. — tw

Re “22 LR Pistols Based on Rifles From Ruger, MRI, and Mossberg,” October 2015

Thanks for the review of the Ruger Charger versus the Magnum Research, which is pretty similar to the old Ruger Charger. I appreciate you taking my suggestion to compare old versus new Chargers and decide if the new is really better. Based on your test, I will be buying one of the new models. I enjoy your unbiased reviews, and I look forward to



behind the slide lock and the wire ejector were understandable in a micro handgun, but this was enough to give the pistol a half-grade demerit. — Bob Campbell

I recently bought the Micro Carry Advocate but haven't yet fired it. Your review talks about carrying hammer down. Is this safe? Wouldn't the firing pin be against the primer? I'd like to carry that way so I just have to pull back the hammer and go. I would appreciate your thoughts.

— Harold

When the hammer is fully down, the firing-pin block prevents the hammer from pressing the firing pin forward. There is a plunger that locks the firing pin in place against forward movement until the trigger is fully pressed to the rear. However, when lowering the hammer, do not



keep the trigger depressed during the entire hammer movement. While maintaining thumb pressure on the hammer, press the trigger just enough to let the hammer move forward, then release the trigger as you thumb the hammer down. This allows the firing pin safety to set. With the trigger pressed during the movement, it is possible the hammer would budge the firing pin forward and "short-circuit" the firing-pin safety. This is why we always decock SIGs or Berettas and never lower the hammer manually. — Bob Campbell

reading each issue.

If you could include some test of some of the specialized clay-shooting semi-autos in upcoming issues, that would be great. If I recall, a number of years ago you tested the Benelli Super Sport and gave it high marks, and I am looking at one pretty hard. But now there is the SX3 Sporting Clays with the red cap and accents, and the Beretta A400 Sporting with odd blue receiver and cap. I would be interested to see those guys go head to head. Sure do like the Super Sport, but at almost \$2K, it better have a great feel! There are over/unders available for less. I am interested in your testers' input before I pull the trigger, so to speak. — Ken F.

I have forwarded your request for development. There are lots of nice-looking new shotguns to choose from. — tw

Re "Hot New Pistols from Kimber And Browning Shoot It Out," September 2015

I am interested in buying a Kimber Micro Carry Advocate. In the test, you gave it a score of A-. Can you please tell me why it was not a "A"? Thanks.

— David M.

The Kimber was a very good handgun, but not perfect. Reliability was excellent, and accuracy above the norm. Details such as the spring

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GT

Pistol-Caliber ARs: We Pit the Stag Arms 9T, Tresna Defense

The Stag Arms is good-to-go out of the box, while the Tresna Defense is not — but the latter offers the convenience of Glock magazine compatibility. Both are worth your consideration.

Carbiners chambered in 9mm with AR-15 controls have been around since the 1980s, when Colt developed the Colt SMG, a select-fire carbine. Since military and LE agencies were familiar with the AR platform, it made sense to create a rifle that offered less penetration, less perceived recoil, less muzzle blast, and better short-range control. Today's advances in ammunition technology has nearly made the overpenetration problem moot. Load an AR chambered in 5.56x45mm NATO with the right bullets and you can control overpenetration, and, of course, the same can also be said with newer 9mm ammo. However, if you're trying to decide on whether to add a 5.56 carbine or a 9mm carbine to your home-defense plans, the muzzle blast from the 5.56x45mm NATO causes some shooters to flinch. The 9mm produces nowhere near the muzzle blast. You pay a penalty for that ballistically, because there is a chasm between the 9mm pistol round and the 5.56 rifle round, which is why the Colt SMG was and is primarily used as an entry weapon to provide a high volume of firepower that can be effectively controlled. If you can't decide, there are plenty of kits that allow a user to adapt a 5.56 AR lower and put on a 9mm upper receiver and a drop-in magazine block to make the 5.56 magwell compatible with 9mm magazines.

What a 9mm AR really offers is a long gun and handgun that share the same ammo. That concept has been around since the days of the Old West because it made sense then and it makes sense today. Another factor to consider is ammunition



The Tresna Defense JAG9G BU, top, uses either S&W or Glock magazines, and the Stag Arms Model 9T, bottom, uses traditional Colt-style stick magazines. Both rifles proved quite capable, though our team would buy the 9T because it's ready to go out of the box.

cost; 9mm ammo, in some cases, is nearly half the cost of 5.56 ammo, and a fairly good assortment of 9mm can usually and easily be found in big-box stores as well as your local mom-and-pop gun store. These rifles also offer nearly the same amount of customization as a standard AR-15 carbine — pistol grips, handguards, BUIS, optics, charging handles, safety selectors, triggers, muzzle devices — allowing nearly an unlimited amount of personalization.

We recently tested two 9mm ARs that look like and have the same controls as an AR-15, but their operating systems were quite different. The Stag Arms 9T and the Tresna Defense JAG9G BU use simple blowback mechanisms, not a gas-impingement system or a gas-



The carriers for the Tresna (left) and Stag Arms (right) are massive compared to a standard AR-15 bolt carrier. This is because they both use blowback actions.

piston system like on an AR-15/M16 rifle or carbine. In a blowback action, there is no gas block, gas tube, or a piston, and the bolt-carrier group

is noticeably different. The AR's bolt-carrier key is not needed, and the bolt carrier is heavier on a 9mm AR compared to a traditional AR-15 bolt carrier. Because the blowback system works off the resistance of the bolt and recoil/buffer spring, a heavier bolt carrier is required. You can feel the effect when the rifle cycles. The bolt and recoil spring move rearward from the force of a shot fired to eject the empty case and cock the hammer. They then move forward via the recoil spring in the buffer tube, with the bolt pushing a cartridge out of the magazine and ramming it into the chamber.

Since 2003, Stag Arms, located in Connecticut, has been manufacturing Mil-Spec AR-15 rifles in a variety of furniture and caliber options; in addition to 9mm, the company offers 5.56mm, 300 BLK, 6.8 SPC, and 22 LR. Stag also makes left-hand variants with the ejection port located on the left side of the rifle. Stag Arms manufactures 80 percent of its parts in house, with only the plastic pieces and some of the small springs manufactured by other vendors. Tresna Defense introduced its civilian rifles in 2014. Located in Georgia, Tresna (which means tool in Basque) makes models compatible with 9mm or 40 S&W magazines from either Glock or S&W M&P pistols. So, depending on your handgun brand and caliber preference, you can have a Tresna rifle that uses the same magazine.

Both of these ARs are dedicated 9mm platforms, meaning they are built specifically to fire 9mm ammo with a dedicated 9mm upper and lower. There are other similarities. Both featured a 16-inch barrel with an A2-style flash hider, A2-style pistol grip, single-stage trigger, and each came in a hard case with one magazine. From there, the rifles' features diverge. The biggest difference between these two rifles is the Stag Arms uses a Colt-style stick magazine, while the Tresna Defense uses Glock Gen4 9mm magazines. We found that the ability to use the same magazines in our handguns and rifles offered a lot

STAG ARMS MODEL 9T 9MM LUGER, \$1275

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

A well-made and well-equipped rifle out of the box. The 9T offered a slightly better trigger pull and slimmer, more-user-friendly handguard.



Action Type	Semi-Auto Blowback	Magazine	(1) 32 Round
Overall Length (Min/Max)	32.5 to 35.75 in.	Front Sight	Metal Diamondhead, Folding
Overall Height (w/o Mag or Sights)	7.5 in.	Rear Sight	Metal Diamondhead, Folding
Weight Unloaded	7.9 lbs.	Sight Radius	19.5 in.
Weight Loaded	8.7 lbs.	Trigger	5.9 lbs., Mil-Spec Single Stage
Upper Receiver	Forged 7075-T6 Aluminum	Safety	Left Side, 2-Pos. Lever
Lower Receiver	7075-T6 Aluminum	Cartridge Case Deflector	Yes
Barrel	16 in., 1:10 RH Twist, Free Float	Dust Cover	Yes
Muzzle Device	A2 Birdcage 5/8x24 TPI	Warranty	Lifetime Transferable
Buttstock	Black Polymer, Mil-Spec, Adj. 6-Pos.	Telephone	(860) 229-9994
Pistol Grip	Black Polymer, A2-Style	Website	StagArms.com
Handguard	13.5 in. Diamondhead VRS-T Free-Floating	Made In/By	Connecticut/Stag Arms
		Not Available	CA, CT, DC, HI, MD, MA, NJ, NY



The straight, skinny, double-column magazine is the standard style magazine for 9mm ARs.



Note the Stag's oversized brass deflector and shortened dust cover and ejection port. We had no issues with reliability.



The M4-style buttstock was adjustable but wiggled slightly; we'd probably replace it.



The Stag 9T's magazine well was slightly beveled; metal magazines inserted fast.

RIFLE COMPARISON

of flexibility. Another difference is the Stag Arms 9T is ready to be used out of the box, due to the flip-up sights being included. The Tresna Defense JAG9G BU does not come with sights, so that can become another way for consumers to separate these two highly-ranked products.

To collect range data and firing preferences, we mounted a Mepro Tru-Dot RDS (Red Dot Sight) with a 1.8-MOA dot reticle (MidwayUSA.com, \$399, #392164). The RDS offers rapid target acquisition with both eyes open. It is constructed with an aluminum body and tough polymer frame around the large viewing window. Power is supplied by a single AA battery, which provides thousands of hours of run time. An auto shut-off feature offers additional energy conservation. The red-dot reticle has four switchable brightness settings; three for day/night use and one for use with GEN II and GEN III NVGs, as well as with magnifiers. The unit also features an integral Picatinny rail mount with quick-detach levers, a weight of 10.5 ounces, and it takes up only 4.5 inches of rail space. When mounted on the two ARs, our shooters saw the RDS at the right height to get a comfortable head position on the stocks.

We also acquired extra magazines for the ARs from Brownells. Three additional Colt-style sticks for the 9T were manufactured by Brownells (Brownells.com; \$93; #078-000-198WB). These 32-round magazines are constructed of steel with a steel follower and wore a slick Xylan coating for smoother operation. We tried a variety Glock Gen4 factory magazines; a G26 10-round (Brownells.com; \$25; #100-002-760WB), a G19 15-rounder (Brownells.com; \$25, #100-002-772W), a G17 17-rounder (Brownells.com; \$25, #100-002-770WB), and a G18 33-rounder (Brownells.com; \$36, #100-002-771WB). If we had purchased three 33-round magazines for the Tresna like we did the Stag Arms, the cost would have been similar, but we wanted to test the Tresna's ability to be compatible with

TRESNA DEFENSE JAG9G BU 9MM LUGER, \$1100

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

This is a quality rifle with good accuracy and the added benefit of being compatible with Glock 9mm magazines of any size.



Action Type	Semi-Auto Blowback	Rear Sight	None
Overall Length (Min/Max)	32 to 36 in.	Front Sight	None
Overall Height (w/o Mag)	7.5 in.	Sight Radius	NA
Weight Unloaded	5.6 lbs.	Trigger	7.5 lbs., Mil-Spec Single Stage
Weight Loaded	6.4 lbs.	Safety	Left Side, 2-Pos. Lever
Upper Receiver	Forged 7075-T6 Aluminum	Cartridge Case Deflector	Yes
Lower Receiver	Aluminum Billet	Dust Cover	Yes
Barrel	16 in., 1:10 RH Twist, Free Float	Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Muzzle Device	A2 Birdcage 5/8x24 TPI	Telephone	(678) 540-3585
Buttstock	Black Polymer, Adj. Rogers Super-Stoc	Website	TresnaDefense.com
Handguard	Midlength Quad Rail	Made In/By	Georgia/Tresna
Magazine	(1) Glock 33 Round	Not Available	CA, CT, DC, HI, MD, MA, NJ, NY



The magazine well was beveled and relieved of metal, so all sizes of Glock 9mm double-stack magazines are compatible.



The excellent Rogers Super-Stoc adjustable stock added value and usability. It didn't rattle because of a lockdown feature.



The ejection port and brass deflector are standard size; many other 9mm ARs use modified versions. Note how the front of the magazine well is textured and flared, giving the shooter a secure grip if you shoot that way.



Here's a G17 Gen4 magazine inserted into the magazine well; that's a 33-round factory Glock magazine below it. This is one easy way to break the tie: Glock owners will prefer the Tresna.

a variety of Glock magazines.

We fired a variety of 9mm ammunition through the pair, starting with some leftover handloads to cook off what remained of any packing grease. We tested at 25 yards because we felt this rifle would more than likely be used at close range, such as across a room, in a defensive situation. We used two 147-grain loads, an FMJ from Atlanta Arms and a JHP from Winchester. We also tried a light 115-grain FMJ load from Sellier & Bellot. Here's what we learned in head-to-head shooting trials:

Stag Arms Model 9T 9mm Luger, \$1275

The upper receiver of the Stag Arms 9T featured a heavy-profile 16-inch 4140-steel barrel with a 1:10-inch twist rate. The bore and chamber were chromed, with the muzzle ending with an A2 flash hider. The barrel was free floated in a 13.5-inch Diamondhead VRS-T modular handguard. The handguard was narrow and smooth, with large notches that make grasping it easy and secure in the hand, which the team liked. At the 3, 6, and 9 o'clock positions, the handguard was drilled and tapped, allowing the user to add a Picatinny rail for accessories. Oblong slots cut out along the sides and on the top side of the handguard helped cool the barrel. A full-length top rail, running from the rear of the upper to the end of the handguard, offered plenty of room to mount an optic and gave the BUIS a longer sight radius than the Tresna, if the latter had backup iron sights installed.


The 9T came with Diamondhead deluxe aluminum flip-up sights, installed with Diamondhead's proprietary diamond-shaped aperture. Many testers liked these sights. The Mepro RDS co-witnessed with the Diamondhead BUIS, something else the team has come to expect when mounting an optic and BUIS on an AR.

The one-piece bolt and carrier worked with a modified ejection port and dust cover — both are nearly half the size of a standard ejection port

RANGE DATA		
Atlanta Arms 9mm Luger 147-gr. FMJ	Tresna Defense JAG9G BU	Stag Arms Model 9T
Average Velocity	1014 fps	1024 fps
Muzzle Energy	336 ft.-lbs.	342 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	0.8 in.	0.7 in.
Average Group	1.0 in.	1.1 in.
Winchester 9mm Luger 147-gr. JHP White Box	Tresna Defense JAG9G BU	Stag Arms Model 9T
Average Velocity	1019 fps	1339 fps
Muzzle Energy	339 ft.-lbs.	458 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	0.9 in.	0.4 in.
Average Group	1.2 in.	0.7 in.
Sellier & Bellot 9mm Luger 115-gr. FMJ	Tresna Defense JAG9G BU	Stag Arms Model 9T
Average Velocity	1300 fps	1338 fps
Muzzle Energy	432 ft.-lbs.	457 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.0 in.	0.8 in.
Average Group	1.1 in.	0.9 in.

To collect accuracy data, we fired five-shot groups from a bench using a rest. Distance: 25 yards with a red-dot optic. We recorded velocities using a ProChrono digital chronograph, with the first screen set 15 feet from the muzzle.

Right: On the Stag, Diamondhead's proprietary diamond-shaped apertures offered ease of use and made the rifle fast to get on target.



Here's what the two look like opened up. Left is the Tresna, with a Glock-style magazine inserted. Right is the Stag with the upper pivoted open, where you can see the lower is dedicated to 9mm magazines because the open area on the Tresna lower is missing. That's the Stag Arms magazine with the orange polymer follower.

and dust cover — and an enlarged brass deflector. The charging handle was a standard AR-15 style unit.

The lower half was built with an integrated magazine well dedicated to a Colt-style straight magazine.

RIFLE COMPARISON



On the Stag Arms Model 9T, left, we liked the Diamondhead sights and handguard. The quad rail on the Tresna Defense JAG9G BU, right was sharp on the hands; rubber rail protectors would be a good investment.



Both the Stag 9T, left, and the Tresna, right, featured ambidextrous sling-attachment brackets that would make attaching a carry strap simple.



Here's the Tresna Defense's flash hider. The threaded muzzles on both rifles allow for the attachment of a suppressor.

The outside dimensions and look of the lower was Mil-Spec, but the magazine well was smaller, designed for use with slimmer 9mm magazines. Plus, the 9T used a specially designed hammer, magazine catch, and recoil buffer to ensure positive reliability with all sorts of 9mm ammo. The Colt SMG of yore used a modified UZI magazine, which, back in the day, was a prime suspect in the SMG's reliability issues. The 9T magazine from Stag Arms was made of steel and used a double-stack column with an orange polymer follower. There were witness holes, and for disassembly and maintenance, the steel floorplate slid out of the body when the detent pin is pressed. We had no issues with the Stag magazine

or the magazines from Brownells. The magazines lock back the bolt when the last shot was fired.

The safety, charging handle, magazine release, and 6-position adjustable buttstock were standard AR-15 fare. The pistol grip and adjustable buttstock were not fancy, but they were serviceable plastic parts. The M4-style stock wiggled slightly. Some testers felt they would replace it. Testers familiar with ARs found it was easy to adapt to both the 9T and the JAG9G BU.

Magazine manipulation with the skinny stick magazine took some getting used to. The magazine well was beveled, which aided insertion. Also, the all-steel magazines seemed to insert easier due to the metal-against-metal slickness, compared to the plastic-against-metal characteristic of the Tresna. All mags dropped freely from both rifles. We allowed magazines from a bolt-lock reload to hit the cement floor of the range in hopes of inciting some magazine failures, but we had absolutely no issues, except scraped magazines. The 9T's magazine was long and did not allow a shooter to

easily fire from the prone position. The rifle needed to be fired with the ejection ports parallel to the ground. The Tresna had a slight edge over the Stag Arms in this respect, because a variety of magazines of different length could be used.

The single-stage trigger averaged a 5.9-pound pull weight and allowed testers to really rip through magazines slightly more accurately than the trigger on the Tresna. The 9T had a bit of creep before it broke, but the groups the Stag Arms provided were helped out due to the trigger, we believe. The best group was with Atlanta Arm 147-grain FMJs, five shots of which came in at 0.48 inches at 25 yards. When the team fired offhand for speed, the groups opened up to about 4 inches, on average, with all the ammo. We needed to practice some bolt-lock reload drills to get accustomed to working the stick magazines better.

Our Team Said: From the onset of live-fire testing, the team found this AR carbine offered everything an AR-15 did but with less recoil, less blast, and less noise. The Stag Arms 9T is good to go out of the box. Accuracy was slightly better than the Tresna, but not by much. Magazine manipulation caused us a bit of ramp up time, but it wasn't a game changer.

Tresna Defense JAG9G BU 9mm Luger, \$1100

The JAG9G BU moved compatibility up a notch since it accepts any Glock Gen4 double-stack 9mm magazines. The Glock fans on the team liked this feature. The Tresna shipped with a factory Glock 33-round magazine. It had similar operating controls to a standard AR-15 and is 99 percent compatible with AR-15 aftermarket parts, the company says.

The forged upper receiver featured a 16-inch barrel with a 1:10 right-hand twist and government-style profile. Screwed onto the muzzle was an A2 flash hider. The barrel was free floated in an aluminum quad rail that offered a very rough grip and plenty of areas to mount accessories. It needed rubber rail guards to take care of the sharp edges. Oblong slots

in the handguard helped cool the rifle. The top rail extended from the rear of the upper through the entire length of the handguard, offering a variety of optic-mounting positions. It comes without sights, so the Tresna needs to have an optic or BUIS mounted in order to be ready to shoot. The cost of a set of sights ranges from \$80 to \$300 depending on type and brand, which is pretty close to the difference in the cost of the two carbines.

The charging handle manipulated the large bolt in the blowback operating system. A full-size dust cover and standard-size brass deflector are used.

The lower receiver was precision machined from billet aluminum, whereas the Stag had a standard forged lower. On the Stag, you can replace the trigger guard, but on the Tresna, it is machined in. The Tresna guard is oversized, so shooters may use gloves and not encounter space problems inside the trigger guard. The magazine well was flared, and

inserting a magazine was fast, even with small G26 magazines. The front edge of the lower's magazine well also had coarse serrations and a flare on the lower edge, allowing a shooter to use this gripping area to pull into the rifle into his or her shooting shoulder.

The magazine well was angled to accommodate the Glock magazines. Inserting a magazine seemed quicker due to the angle of the magazine well and position of loading hand. On the 9T, the magazine needs to be inserted perpendicular into the receiver, so a little more reloading skill and practice was required to do it quickly.

Material was machined away forward from the trigger on both sides, so either a right- or left-handed shooter can comfortably position a trigger finger at the ready. The adjustable Rogers stock was a nice piece of plastic, according to most members of the team. It featured a lock-down lever that takes any

wiggle out of the adjustable stock. The A2-style pistol grip worked well. The single-stage trigger had a bit of creep, but consistently broke at 7.5 pounds. On the last round fired, the bolt locked rearward.

Like the Stag Arms rifle, the Tresna had a preference for the heavier 147-grain bullets. Atlanta Arms gave up 1.0-inch five-round groups at 25 yards. Shooting offhand for speed, team members could fire fast and easily place rounds in center of mass. The rifle performed without any issues and with any Glock Gen4 9mm magazine we ran through it.

Our Team Said: The JAG9G BU performed well. Accuracy was good, as was reliability. Compatibility with Glock magazines is a plus if you already own a Glock handgun. It needed sights or an optic out of the box. The stock was top notch, but handguard would probably be replaced.

Written and photographed by Robert Sadowski, using evaluations from GUN TESTS team testers. GT

GUN TESTS VALUE GUIDE: TOP-RANKED PISTOL-CALIBER CARBINES

GUN NAME	ISSUE	GRADE & COMMENTS
Thureon Defense 45 ACP Carbine, \$970	June 2014	Grade A: Worked well with a variety of loads from hardball to +P. Good trigger and back-up sights.
Beretta CX4 Storm PX4 JX4P415 40 S&W, \$915	March 2014	Grade A: Ergonomic, reliable, and accurate. We find nothing to fault in its performance and handling.
Wise Lite Arms Sterling L2A3 9mm Luger, ~\$500	June 2013	Grade A: This collectible's all-business look was matched by its excellent construction and perfect operation.
Thureon Defense Carbine 9mm Luger, \$700	June 2012	Grade A: Makes the leap from a good home defender to a carbine effective for area defense.
Just Right Carbine (Glock Based) 45 ACP, \$773	Feb 2015	Grade A-: After a trip to the factory for warranty repair, the JRC became reliable, accurate, and useful.
Kel-Tec Sub 2000 Carbine 9mm Luger, \$400	June 2012	Grade A-: The Kel-Tec design really grows on you. Controls are well laid out on this folding rifle.
Kriss Super V Vector CRB/SO KCRBS0803801 45 ACP, \$1895	Aug 2011	Grade A-: Handled nicely, shot accurately. It's Swiss. Named a gun of the year for 2011.
57Center AR57 PDW 5.7X28mm Upper, \$696	March 2011	Grade B+: Our shooters liked the PDW Upper. There was nothing functionally wrong with the design or execution.

Log on to Gun-Tests.com to read complete reviews of these products in the designated months.

HANDGUN COMPARISON

Derringer Shoot-out: DoubleTap, Cobra, American Derringer Co.

Three small handguns go head to head at the range and in the pocket. One comes out a clear favorite of our testers.

What about derringers? Are they worthwhile to buy and carry, or not? The original derringer was a product of one Henry Deringer, a 19th-century maker of small muzzleloading pocket pistols. His original Philadelphia Deringer percussion-lock pistols were usually 41 caliber and varied in length from 1.5 to 6 inches. The most notable use of a Deringer was by John Wilkes Booth, who shot President Abraham Lincoln. Once cartridge guns came into being, Deringer's name was misspelled often enough to become the generic description of a small pocket pistol of limited capacity, often with a sliding or pivoting breech block. They commonly carried two shots, although some were designed for up to four shots. They were sometimes called "muff pistols" because they were carried in a muff or hand warmer used in the winter. Also, the derringer became a backup favorite of Western marshals and outlaws alike.

Among the most successful of these handguns was the Remington

We tested three pistols, two chambered in 9mm and one in 38 Special. The DoubleTap, top, is a new design, and if you must have a derringer, it is the safest handling of the three for most users. However, the DoubleTap kicked us hard, and we didn't like shooting it. The American Derringer Company handgun, middle, is equally as safe, if the automatic safety is properly set. The Cobra Derringer, bottom, isn't better than the other two, except in cost. Neither was it useful past point-blank range. We think the American Derringer Co. 38 Special is a good update of an old design, and it would be our pick from this set, if we had to have a derringer.

Derringer. In fact, the Remington's profile is associated more with the derringer than Deringer's original single-shot black-powder pistol. The Remington doubled the payload with twin barrels in the over-and-under fashion. The Remington barrels pivot upward to load and unload, and a pivoting cam on the firing



Back in the day, this 41-caliber Remington Derringer was a good companion. The Cobra is basically an updated Remington Derringer. Despite their problems, these little guns keep on selling.



The double-action-only 22-caliber High Standard might be the logical predecessor of the DoubleTap. It is a joy to fire and use.

pin fired first one barrel then the other. The Remington Derringer was made of iron, never steel, and was manufactured from 1866 to 1935. That is a long run for a relatively primitive handgun. The .41 Short Rimfire it fired was no powerhouse, exiting the Remington barrel at 425 fps. There have been many copies of the Remington, and two of the pistols tested in this report are copies of the Remington, namely the Cobra Enterprises CB9 Big Bore Derringer 9mm Luger, \$151; and the American Derringer Company Standard Model 38 Special, which we bought used for

\$212. The third gun in the test was a new take on the derringer concept, the DoubleTap Defense Tactical Pocket Pistol in 9mm Luger, \$499 MSRP and a \$345 counter price from Cheaper Than Dirt!.

The derringers were all easy to carry well, and the balance and flat profile make for a nice pocket or vest pistol. However, after testing both the derringer concept and the individual derringers, we think the money spent on these handguns would be better used elsewhere. But we graded on a “derringer” scale relative to each other, even though none of our test shooters would buy one. Here’s what we found:

**Cobra Enterprises CB9
Big Bore Derringer
9mm Luger, \$151**

This was our price at the time of the test from CheaperThanDirt.com. The Cobra Derringer weighed about 14 ounces, was about 4.5 inches long and featured two 2.75-inch barrels. This was a single-action design with an exposed hammer, requiring the hammer to be cocked for firing. The finish was adequate for the type and was evenly applied. The grips were surprisingly attractive and fit the frame well. However, the grips loosened with a minimum amount of firing. There was a rib on top of the upper barrel and a set of rudimentary fixed sights.

The Cobra was difficult to cock on the draw and also difficult to use well, we thought. The handle didn’t fit most hands well, the grip was disrupted by the cocking motion, and the trigger compression was heavy at just over 14 pounds. Compression was riddled with creep, and the trigger broke abruptly with considerable backlash. This was the worst trigger action we ever recall testing.

To open the pistol, the shooter moved a lever above the trigger downward and all the way to its forward travel spot, and the barrels swung upward. Two rounds were loaded. The barrels were closed and the lever returned to the locked position. There was a rudimentary

**COBRA ENTERPRISES CB9 BIG BORE DERRINGER
9MM LUGER, \$151**

GUN TESTS GRADE: D

The Cobra Derringer is a modern attempt to provide a useful pocket firearm. Operation is straightforward, although some attention to detail is needed to carry safely.



The Cobra Derringer tilts upward for loading.



Action	Single
Overall Length	4.65 in.
Overall Height	3.5 in.
Maximum Width	1.2 in.
Weight Unloaded	14.0 oz.
Weight Loaded	15.0 oz.
Barrel Length	2.75 in.
Barrel	Steel
Magazine	None
Frame	Alloy
Frame Front Strap Height	1.1 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	1.8 in.
Grips	Wood
Grip Thickness (max)	1.2 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	4.25 in.
Sights	Fixed
Trigger Pull Weight	14.0 lbs.
Trigger Span	2.75 in.
Safety	Bolt Type
Warranty	Lifetime
Website	CobraPistols.net
Telephone	(801) 908-8300
Made In	Utah/Cobra Enterprises



The hammer is cocked in this illustration. The Cobra Derringer features a long hammer fall.

Left: A manual extractor is used to remove spent casings from the Cobra pistol. Below, the extractor skipped a case rim.



HANDGUN COMPARISON

extractor attached to the barrel that worked well enough. To fire the pistol, the shooter cocked the hammer and pressed the trigger. Considerable effort was required to cock the hammer. It was easier to come across the side of the hammer, rather than bringing the thumb over from the rear. Female shooters experienced some difficulty and found cocking the hammer of the Cobra to be a two-hand proposition. After the hammer was cocked and one barrel fired, the shooter had to cock the hammer again to fire the other barrel. Out of the box, the Cobra fired the bottom barrel first.

The safe operation of the Cobra demands attention to detail. We are leery of a handgun that requires this much study to operate safely. Before loading the pistol, the shooter moved the hammer partially to the rear without cocking the hammer and pressed the button type safety to the left. If this safety is not actuated, a firing pin nose will rest upon the primer of the chambered cartridge. Since the Cobra uses a rebounding-type firing-pin system, only one firing pin will be at rest on the cartridges at a time. This is an antiquated and unsafe firing-pin position, in our opinion. Next, load the pistol. To fire the Cobra, the hammer must be cocked before the safety may be pushed to the left. You cannot move the safety and then cock the hammer. During the firing tests, most raters used the left hand to work the safety; a few with long fingers used the forefinger. This wasn't a fast system. During the test the raters — all experienced — sometimes failed to kick the safety over, and the Cobra did not fire. Cock the hammer and pull the trigger, and the hammer falls, but the gun doesn't go bang if the safety is engaged. It just isn't natural to cock a hammer and then release a safety.

During firing, we used the SIG Sauer Elite 115-grain FMJ load (\$12.50/50 rounds from Targetsports.com) and the Winchester USA 115-grain JHP (\$21/50 from CheaperThanDirt.com) We had a few surprises when firing

RANGE DATA

SIG Sauer Elite 9mm Luger 115-gr. FMJ

Average Velocity
Muzzle Energy
Average Group Size

Cobra CB9 Derringer

1050 fps
281 ft.-lbs.
6 in.

DoubleTap Tactical

1080 fps
297 ft.-lbs.
8 in.

Winchester USA 9mm Luger 115-gr. JHP

Average Velocity
Muzzle Energy
Average Group Size

Cobra CB9 Derringer

944 fps
227 ft.-lbs.
6.5 in.

DoubleTap Tactical

994 fps
252 ft. lbs.
9.0 in.

American Derringer Company Derringer

Average Velocity
Muzzle Energy
Average Group Size

Black Hills 38 Sp. 148-gr. WC

760 fps
189 ft.-lbs.
3.8 in.

Black Hills 38 Sp. 125-gr. JHP +P

901 fps
225 ft.-lbs.
5.0 in.

To collect accuracy data, we fired five-shot groups off a solid bench rest. Distance was 5 yards. We recorded velocities with a Shooting Chrony Master Chronograph. The first sky screen was set 10 feet from the muzzle.

Ammunition Sources: SIG Sauer Elite 9mm Luger 115-grain full metal jacket (Targetsports.com, \$12.50/50), Winchester USA 9mm Luger 115-grain jacketed hollowpoint (CheaperThanDirt.com, \$21/50). Black Hills Ammunition 38 Special 148-grain Wadcutter (VenturaMunitions.com, \$26/50); Black Hills Ammunition 38 Special 125-gr. JHP +P (MidwayUSA.com, \$36.42/50).

Both 9mm loads were standard-pressure rated from reputable makers and did not exhibit high-pressure signs in the Cobra Derringer, left. They exhibited high-pressure signs in the DoubleTap.



This tester has fired a lot of guns over the years. She enjoyed a few rounds with the High Standard 22, shown, but the DoubleTap actually hurt her hand. These pocket pistols are great because they're easy to carry, such as in a purse, shirt pocket, or skirt pocket. But the more powerful cartridges make the light platforms hard to handle for many shooters, men included.

the Cobra Derringer. First, the Cobra was not terribly uncomfortable to fire as far as recoil. Most raters likened it to the recoil of a steel-frame Chief's Special with standard 38 Special loads. The muzzle flipped up in recoil and the grip rolled back, much like on a single-action revolver. Another surprise were the velocities achieved by the 115-grain loads. The SIG Sauer Elite load clocked 1050 fps versus 1160 fps in a Browning High Power, while the Winchester load clocked 944 fps, down from 1170 fps in the High Power. Different powder does funny things in a short barrel.

While firing the pistol, the raters were at odds of how to test the gun. Drawing from the pocket and cocking quickly and firing the pistol resulted in a 6-inch group of two shots at ten feet or so. This wasn't fast, considering the need to cock the hammer for each shot and taking the safety off. With a deliberate effort, standing in the two-hand stance, we fired at a man-sized silhouette at 5 yards. The point of impact versus point of aim was 18 inches high. Four shots grouped into 8 inches at 5 yards with the most deliberate fire. During the firing session, one of the Winchester loads was not ejected by the manual ejector. The hook slipped over the case rim, but this did not tie the gun up. The other barrel could still be loaded and fired. A pencil cleared this failure to extract.

Our Team Said: We do not like the need to cock the hammer and then move the safety, but on the other hand, we would never carry the handgun loaded with the safety off. Thus, the ability to quickly draw the pistol, shove it into the opponent's body, and then fire is limited by the system. All the raters agreed that for personal defense on a tight budget, the High Point or SCCY 9mm is leagues ahead of this gun. So is the North American mini revolver, save for power. We would not buy this gun.

DoubleTap Defense Tactical Pocket Pistol 9mm Luger, \$345

The price listed was our price at the time of the test, but the Gunbroker "buy it now" price in October 2015

**DOUBLETAP DEFENSE TACTICAL DERRINGER
9MM LUGER, \$345**

GUN TESTS GRADE: D

The pistol is so difficult to fire due to the heavy recoil, realistic practice is out of the question, at least for our shooters.



The operating system of the DoubleTap is simple: Press the barrel release forward, and the barrel tilts downward.

Action	Double Action Only
Overall Length	5.5 in.
Overall Height	3.8 in.
Maximum Width	0.67 in.
Weight Unloaded	14.5 oz.
Weight Loaded	15.5 oz.
Barrel Length	3.0 in.
Barrel	Steel
Magazine	None
Frame	Aluminum
Frame Front Strap Height	1.1 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	2.5 in.
Grips	NA
Grip Thickness (max)	0.665 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.25 in.
Sights	Fixed
Trigger Pull Weight Double Action	15 lbs.
Trigger Span Double Action	3.0 in.
Safety	None
Warranty	Lifetime
Website	DoubleTapDefense.com
Telephone	(855) 243-4937
Made In/By	Missouri/DoubleTap Defense



Firing the DoubleTap was a chore, but the derringer was reliable in our tests.



SIG Sauer Elite ammunition, left, showed excess-pressure signs in the DoubleTap handgun. Winchester USA loads, right, also exhibited flattened primers in the DoubleTap derringer.

dropped to \$199 for many new-in-the-box listings. Our FFLs tell us the dealer prices for DoubleTaps have dropped from \$300+; now the dealer price is \$149. We want to be clear and say we would purchase a Taurus Millennium or a good used Glock instead of this gun style. But they will

not hide out where the DoubleTap will. So, if owning a flat hideout pistol is your goal, then read on.

The DoubleTap gets high marks for fit, finish, and appearance. The DoubleTap has a snag-free profile with an internal double-action-only trigger mechanism. The trigger

HANDGUN COMPARISON

action was long and heavy at about 15 pounds and it stacked badly, in our opinion. The action was safe for carrying two rounds chambered without an external safety. There was a cross-bolt style release that holds the barrels in place. Press this ambidextrous control to the rear to swing the barrels upward for loading. There is no extractor or ejector. The sights on the handgun were a simple groove in the top of the cover, with a post on the barrel.

We got a surprise when we fired the pistol. We expected something akin to the Cobra's recoil, but the DoubleTap stung us when fired, and recoil was actually painful and startling. The fit of the grip was angular with abrupt edges, and the pistol was only about 0.65 inch wide, which likewise caused great discomfort when firing. Our testers reported that this was the worst and most painful gun to shoot yet. In our opinion, the pistol's recoil makes it unsuitable for use by anyone intending to fire the pistol in practice sessions as opposed to simply loading it and carrying it.

Shooting at a man-sized target at 5 yards, four shots went into 12 inches with the sight regulation better than the Cobra, about 6 inches high. The lower barrel seemed better regulated at 5 inches high. We liked the DoubleTap's double-action trigger better than the Cobra's.

Elsewhere, the DoubleTap exhibited greater velocity than the Cobra. However, with both standard-pressure loads tested, the DoubleTap exhibited high-pressure signs. The primers of every round fired were flattened. This is troubling.

Our Team Said: Due to harsh recoil, poor accuracy, and concern about excess pressure, the DoubleTap received a low rating. We would not buy this gun.

**American Derringer Co.
Standard Model 38 Special,
\$212 (Used)**

The American Derringer Company 38 Special isn't a perfect comparison because it isn't a 9mm, but we thought the recoil and terminal performance would be similar enough to include

**AMERICAN DERRINGER CO. STANDARD MODEL
38 SPECIAL, \$212 (USED)
GUN TESTS GRADE: A**

The American Derringer Company handgun is a very good upgrade of the original Remington design. The construction is robust, and the pistol is well polished. The grips fit well. The plunger to release the barrel lock is an excellent addition to the derringer design, and the hammer block really sold us on the pistol. While we question the viability of the derringer for personal defense, they are still popular handguns. If you must purchase a derringer, this is the one to have.



The American Derringer Company handgun opens much like any other Remington-style Derringer pistol.

The American Derringer Company's sights offer rapid targeting. The rear sight was easily the best of the test, and the blade front sight was tall and easy to see. It shot the best, too.



Action	Single Action
Overall Length	4.8 in.
Overall Height	3.25 in.
Maximum Width	1.0 in.
Weight Unloaded	15.7 oz.
Weight Loaded	16.8 oz.
Barrel Length	3.0 in.
Barrel	Steel
Magazine	None
Frame	Steel
Frame Front Strap Height	1.25 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	1.9 in.
Grips	Wood
Grip Thickness (max)	1.1 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	4.5 in.
Sights	Fixed
Trigger Pull Weight	8.0 lbs.
Trigger Span	2.75 in.
Safety	Bolt Type; Automatic @ Half Cock
Warranty	Lifetime
Website	Amderringer.com
Telephone	(254) 799-9111
Made In	TX/American Derringer Co.

Right: The plunger above the trigger must be depressed to open the American Derringer Company breech block.



it, and its size and weight are appropriate for the caliber. The American Derringer Co. 38 Special was a very well finished single-action design with several improvements over the Remington type. The rear sight was easily the best of the pistols

tested, and the tall front sight offered a quick reference in aiming. There are several other touches that earned this derringer a superior rating.

First, the lever that releases the barrel to turn 180 degrees up is spring loaded with a plunger.



This company schematic shows the guts of the DoubleTap pistol. The two rounds in the grip are extras.



The Remington Derringer operates the way as the Cobra, but the early design is simpler.



The inexpensive Cobra derringer is a neat little gun in some ways. But we wouldn't choose it for personal defense. Concealed carriers who do want to pack a derringer might want to take a look at the Hunter line of holsters. They're well made and suitable for the task.

Having experience with Remington derringers and cheap copies that lost tension in the lever, this was a good addition, our gunsmith said. The grips were hand filling and comfortable. The trigger action was easily the best of the three derringers tested, breaking at a relatively crisp 8 pounds. However, there seemed to be some hesitation in the sear break and hammer fall. The American

Derringer Company derringer was much easier to cock quickly than the Cobra. There was also a hammer-block safety that American Derringer Company advertised as automatic, but it isn't quite. When the shooter loads the pistol and then brings the hammer back to the safety notch, the hammer block was applied. Thereafter, simply cock the hammer and fire the gun. The firing pin block works automatically, true enough, but be certain to pull the hammer to the safety notch to set it.

Firing the American Derringer Company 38 Special was interesting. Working at speed, we were able to deliver hits on man-sized targets with a degree of accuracy at 7 yards. Felt recoil was less than the Cobra 9mm, due to the superior grips and slightly heavier weight. With careful deliberation, we were able to fire a 4-inch group of six shots at 7 yards on one occasion, but we tested the gun for accuracy at the 5-yard range, as we did with the others. The load used was the Black Hills Ammunition 148-grain Target Wadcutter. Average velocity was 760 fps, superior to what we got out of a snubnose 38 Special revolver (730 fps, Smith & Wesson 442 with 1.9-inch barrel.) We also fired a few rounds of Black Hills Ammunition 125-grain JHP +P, with velocity hovering around 900 fps. Recoil was sharp, about the same as an aluminum-frame 38 Special snubnose. But we were able to fire comfortably enough to get hits at 7 yards. One of our raters, a law-enforcement veteran, summed it up: "I can see this as a backup or third gun." Another noted that he could see carrying this derringer in the pocket with a shotshell up first for use against reptiles.

Our Team Said: The American Derringer Co. derringer is a better choice than either of the other derringers tested, we believe. Note: Our rating isn't as a defensive handgun compared to revolvers or small autos, but rather as a derringer only.

Written and photographed by R.K. Campbell, using evaluations from GUN TESTS team testers. GT

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2015 Guns & Gear 'A' List

Which firearms, accessories, and ammunition offer the best combinations of performance and value? We look back at the previous 12 months of *GUN TESTS* to pick a bunch of winners.

Toward the end of each year, I survey the work R.K. Campbell, Roger Eckstine, Austin Miller, Ray Ordorica, Robert Sadowski, David Tannahill, Tracey Taylor, John Taylor, Rafael Urista, Ralph Wingham, and Kevin Winkle have done in *GUN TESTS*, with an eye toward selecting guns, accessories, and ammunition the magazine's testers have endorsed. From these evaluations I pick the best from a full year's worth of tests and distill recommendations for readers, who often use them as shopping guides. These choices are a mixture of our original tests and other information I've compiled during the year. After we roll high-rated test products into long-term testing, I keep tabs on how those guns do, and if the firearms and accessories continue performing well, then I have confidence including them in this wrap-up.

— Todd Woodard



**BEST
IN CLASS
REVOLVER
'15**

**Smith & Wesson
M69 162069 44
Magnum, \$849**



**BEST
IN CLASS
PISTOL
'15**

**Springfield Armory
XD-S 3.3 XDS9339B
9mm Luger, \$494**



**BEST
IN CLASS
ACCESSORY
'15**

**Mako Group FAB
Defense Survival
Buttstock GL-MAG,
\$122; and Monopod
Buttstock Add-On
MBA, \$97**



**BEST
IN CLASS
RIFLE
'15**

Mitchell's Mauser M48 8x57mm, \$450



**BEST
IN CLASS
SHOTGUN
'15**

**Remington 870 Tactical
81200 12 Gauge, \$442**

GUN TESTS 2015 'A' LIST PRODUCTS

- ★ American Derringer Co. Standard Model 38 Sp., \$212
 - ★ Artillery Luger 9mm Luger, ~\$2500
- ★ Battle Rifle Co. BR4 LIT Carbine 5.56 NATO, \$1495
- ★ Bersa Thunder Pro Ultra Compact 9mm Luger, \$405
- ★ Browning Citori 325 28977NWC33 20 Ga. O-U, \$1500
 - ★ Browning Citori Crossover Target 12 Ga., \$1999
- ★ Colt Gold Cup Trophy 05070X 45 ACP, \$1249
- ★ Colt New Frontier P4840 45 Colt/45 ACP, \$1818
 - ★ Colt M4 LE6920S0COM 5.56x45 NATO, \$1622
 - ★ Colt Series 70 01970A1CS 45 ACP, \$953
- ★ Charter Arms Target Bulldog 74440 44 Sp, \$470
- ★ CZ-USA Ringneck SxS 06103 20 Gauge, \$1022
 - ★ Heckler & Koch VP9 9mm Luger, \$630
- ★ HiperFire HiperTouch EDT AR-15/AR-10 Trigger, \$89
- ★ Iver Henriksen Mauser 98 338 Win. Mag., ~\$5000
 - ★ JOX Revolver Speedloader Pouch, \$43
- ★ Just Right Carbine (Glock Based) 45 ACP, \$773
 - ★ Krag 1898 Springfield 30-40 Krag, ~\$1500
- ★ Magnum Research Picuda MLP-1722 22 LR, \$600
- ★ PTR PTR-91 G.I. 915304 308 Win./7.62 NATO, \$850
- ★ Remington Model 870 No. 81180 20 Gauge, \$530
 - ★ Ruger 22 Charger Pistol 4917 22 LR, \$309
 - ★ Ruger LCP-C Custom No. 3740 380 ACP, \$419
- ★ Ruger Elite 452 AR-15/AR-10 Trigger 90461, \$160
 - ★ Ruger LC9s Standard #3235 9mm Luger, \$339
- ★ Ruger SR1911 CMD-A Model 6711 45 ACP, \$899
- ★ Springfield Armory 1911 R.O. PI9129LP 9mm, \$704
 - ★ Stag Arms Model 9T 9mm Luger, \$1275
 - ★ S&W M48-2 22 WMR Revolver, \$900-\$1300
- ★ S&W 1911E SW1911TA 108409 45 ACP, \$1399
 - ★ S&W M&P40c 109203 40 S&W, \$480
 - ★ S&W M19-4 357 Magnum, \$450-\$750
- ★ S&W Champion M625-8 JM 160936 45 ACP, \$979
 - ★ S&W PC M627 170133 357 Magnum, \$1079
 - ★ S&W M686 357 Magnum, \$600-\$850
- ★ SIG Sauer 1911 1911R-45TACOPS 45 ACP, \$1213
- ★ Tristar TEC-12 No. 25120 Pump/Auto 12 Gauge, \$689
 - ★ Winchester Modified M70 338 Win. Mag., \$1390
- ★ Tresna Defense JAG9G BU 9mm Luger, \$1100
 - ★ Winchester 1892 LDT 44-40 WCF, \$1900

The Springfield Armory XD-S 3.3 XDS9339B 9mm Luger, \$494 is a highly modified XD that stands on its own merits. It resembles the larger XD pistols, but the operation is different. The pistol featured a dust cover on the rear of the slide rather than the characteristic exposed striker of the larger XD. The stippling and surface abrasion of the Springfield were ideal for our shooters. The finish was never uncomfortable, and the grip was never in question. The XD was also the only handgun with an ambidextrous magazine release. Takedown was via a lever, a feature on larger service-grade handguns.

The low profile sights featured a red fiber-optic front component and

a drift-adjustable steel rear sight. This made for good results when running a combat course at high speed. We began the combat course with the Black Hills 115-grain FMJ load, progressed to the HPR 115- and 124-grain loads, and fired a single magazine of the Cor-Bon DPX load. Results were excellent. We were able to keep the steel plates ringing and combat groups were excellent, but then this was the heaviest handgun and the one with the longest barrel. During this time at the range, we thought the trigger compression was suitably controllable at 7.0 pounds.

Early on, we experienced a failure of the slide to lock back on the last round after every magazine and with both magazines. After the first four

magazines of ammunition, the slide began to lock back. This may have been shooter error, as we may have rode the thumb on the slide lock. Also, on several occasions, we felt that too much effort was needed to operate the magazine release. Again, this cleared up during the test. Perhaps we simply needed to learn the touch. In any case, the slide never locked back during a firing string, so we were not applying upward pressure during recoil — a neat bridge on the frame prevents this from happening. Each handgun must be learned for its own merits and foibles.

Once the magazine-release problem was solved, the pistol exhibited excellent speed in magazine replacement. We fired with both the 7-round and the optional 9-round magazine. There wasn't a lot of difference. If maximum concealment is needed, the shorter magazine works well, while the longer magazine gives 10 rounds at the ready when concealment isn't as important.

When firing for accuracy off a bench rest, the Springfield put out the best averages across the board, most notably 2.0 inches with the HPR 115-grain JHP loading.

Our Team Said: The XD-S is supplied with a range holster, magazine carrier, and a spare magazine. The Springfield also had a rail, a loaded-chamber indicator on the top of the slide, and grip inserts. If you are willing to spend the extra money and carry the pistol in an inside-the-waistband holster rather than the pocket, the XD-S represents a good option. The Springfield, in the words of one rater, "Shoots like a big gun."

The Model 69 Combat Magnum debuted in 2014 and is a departure from S&W's typical 44 Magnum revolvers. The new Model 69 is built on an L-frame, which Smith brought out in 1980 for the 357 Magnum. An N-frame revolver is S&W's typical frame used for the 44 Magnum. To fit the caliber in the L-frame, the cylinder capacity was reduced to five shots; N-frames have six shots. There is

**SPRINGFIELD ARMORY XD-S 3.3 XDS9339B
9MM LUGER, \$494
GUN TESTS GRADE: A (OUR PICK)
BEST IN CLASS PISTOL**

The XD-S was a great shooter. Its accuracy was the best of the handguns tested. The pistol was reliable. We liked the safety features. With the extended magazine, the XDS also offers ten shots for home defense.



With the extended magazine, the XDS 3.3 is more comfortable to fire.

Action	Locked Breech DAO Semi-Auto
Overall Length	6.3 in.
Overall Height	4.43 in.
Overall Height w/extended mag.	5.43 in.
Maximum Width	0.9 in.
Weight Unloaded	23 oz.
Weight Loaded	26 oz.
Barrel	3.3 in. Long; Melonite-Finish Steel
Capacity	7+1
Slide	Melonite-Finish Steel
Grip Frame	Textured Black Polymer
Frame Front Strap Height	1.9 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	2.75 in.
Grip Thickness (max)	0.9 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.75 in.
Sights	Fiber-Optic Front; Steel Dovetail Rear
Trigger Pull Weight	7.0 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.6 in.
Magazines	2; Stainless Steel
Safety	No Manual safety
Warranty	Lifetime Limited
Made In	Croatia
Website	SpringfieldArmory.com

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nothing special in the metallurgy of the L-frame, S&W's current heat-treating process already makes the metal plenty strong enough to handle the pressures from a 44 Magnum. S&W did, however, have to change the geometry on the cylinder crane so the cylinder would close without hitting the barrel inside the frame.

The Model 69 is constructed of stainless steel and wears a glass-bead-matte-stainless finish. Barrel length is 0.25 inch longer than the other reviewed revolvers. The two-piece barrel was made with a stainless-steel barrel shroud over a steel barrel. The Smith used a half lug under the barrel. The top of the barrel was serrated, and at the muzzle was a pinned serrated blade with a red insert. The fully adjustable rear sight also had a white outline around the notch. This was an excellent set up, according to our crew. The top strap of the frame was also drilled and tapped under the rear sight, which could also be removed and an optic attached if so desired.

The trigger, hammer, and cylinder latch were blued and contrasted nicely with the rest of the revolver's finish. The trigger was smooth, and the hammer spur offered plenty of traction to thumb back the hammer and fire in single action. The cylinder latch was precise, and we had no doubt the cylinder was locked up tightly when we shot it.

At the front of the crane was a ball detent that locked into a V-shaped groove in the frame. Team members liked this set-up better than the cylinder lock on the Taurus. We felt it was better built and locked the cylinder into the frame better. With the cylinders swung open, we could also see the spaces between the chambers on the Model 69 were beefy, so pressure was not an issue.

The Model 69 also placed the cylinder notches directly between the chambers where there was the most metal. We thought the cylinder was plenty tough. The Smith also had a long ejector rod that better ejected empty cases than other revolvers.

The Smith's hard-rubber grip with

SMITH & WESSON M69 162069 44 MAGNUM, \$849

GUN TESTS GRADE: A BEST IN CLASS REVOLVER

The new Model 69 from Smith & Wesson is an excellent downsized 44 Magnum with a good, smooth trigger pull in DA and crisp in SA. The sights were well designed and user friendly.



The front blade is pinned in place and can be changed.



Left: That is the ball detent (arrow) that locks up the front of the cylinder; it snaps into a V-shaped groove in the frame.
Right: With the cylinder closed in the frame, note the ball detent is locked into the frame at the bottom edge of the shroud.

Action	Double Action
Overall Length	9.75 in.
Overall Height	6.0 in.
Maximum Width (Cylinder)	1.6 in.
Weight Unloaded	37.2 oz.
Weight Loaded	39.8 oz.
Barrel Length	4.25 in.
Capacity	5
Frame Material/Size	Stainless Steel L-frame
Cylinder Material	Stainless Steel, Fluted
Frame Front Strap Height	2.2 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	4.2 in.
Grips	Rubber Finger Groove
Grip Thickness (max)	1.2 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.7 in.
Front Sight	Red Ramp
Rear Sight	Adjustable White Outline
Sight Radius	6.0 in.
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	4.8 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight Double Action	12.0 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.6 in.
Trigger Span Double Action	3.3 in.
Safety	None
Warranty	Lifetime
Telephone	(800) 331-0852
Website	Smith-Wesson.com
Made In	Springfield, Mass.

slight finger grooves and a slight palm swell had a nice texture and felt good in the hand for most reviewers.

In action, the Model 69 was a pussycat with 44 Special ammo. Recoil was very manageable for experienced shooters, but this is still not a novice's revolver. Change to 44 Magnum and the Model 69 was a real wrist cracker, according to some testers. The lighter weight of the L-frame, compared to the typical N-frame, made felt recoil more pronounced with hotter loads.

Accuracy with the new Black Hills ammo was excellent. Using a rest and firing in single-action mode, we were able to shoot groups under an inch at 25 yards. The Model 69 seemed to like the slower bullets. The faster Sellier & Bellot ammo, with a muzzle

velocity of 1188 fps, gave larger groups. The Black Hills 44 Magnum and Remington 44 Special clocked at 956 fps and 679 fps, respectively.

We used an OWB holster to carry the Model 69 a trail gun. Reviewers thought it would make a great deer gun for use at bow-hunting range.

Our Team Said: The new S&W Model 69 is an excellent revolver that's well made and nicely finished, with very usable sights and a smooth trigger in double action that is also crisp in single action. Irrespective of its heavy price, team members would buy the Model 69 to hang on their belts.

Our first look at the Mitchell Mauser M48 Collector Grade 8x57 JS (8mm Mauser) gave us hope that here we had an essentially new 98

MITCHELL'S MAUSER M48 8X57MM, \$450

GUN TESTS GRADE: A BEST IN CLASS RIFLE

Looking very much like a wartime Mauser 98K, the Mitchell Mauser M48 is not German, but Yugoslavian, made after WWII in the late 1940s and preserved unused since then. We liked the way this one shot and felt with mil-spec ammo.



Overall Length	43.0 in.	Action Type	Bolt
Barrel Length	23.2 in.	Barrel Finish	Blued
Sight Radius	20.0 in.	Magazine Type	Box
Overall Height	6.7 in.	Stock	Teak
LOP	13.1 in.	Trigger Pull Weight	6.5 lbs.
Weight Unloaded	8.6 lbs.	Warranty	Money-Back Guarantee
Weight Loaded	8.9 lbs.	Telephone	(800) 274-4124
Capacity	5	Website	Mauser.org
Action Finish	Blued	Made In	Yugoslavia

Mauser to play with. The bore, finish, wood and all the stuff that came with it looked new, except that some of the accessories showed some age marks. This version came with a fancy certificate along with a leather sling, bayonet in scabbard, leather frog or bayonet hanger, leather ammo pouch, and a field cleaning kit. The certificate stated the rifle had been in military storage since its manufacture in Yugoslavia during the 1940s. It went on to state the rifle had been inspected and tested every five years since its storage, essentially stating these are not newly made replicas, but older original Mausers. The M48 Mausers were made in Yugoslavia after WWII — presumably in 1948 and after — so there is no reason to doubt these are in fact all original. They came from a factory or arsenal that has been in Yugoslavia since the late 1800s.

There is, in fact, lots of commentary online to the effect that these so-called all-original rifles from Mitchell's have been gussied up, restamped (all the numbers of our test rifle match, even the stock), reblued, refinished, and the like. Was this rifle ground down, restamped with all-matching numbers, and then reblued? Then how come the crest is pristine? Was

the metal completely buffed, reblued, new barrels stuck in and the wood sanded and refinished? No, it was not, because in the first place there would be no profit in doing so. Also, the stock is by no means skimpy. It's proud of the wood everywhere, which refinished wood would not be. The M48 rifles were made after WWII, and they could easily have been put in storage because there was no great need for them. Because the Germans had nothing to do with the making of these rifles that came from an ancient armory or factory, there is no reason the Yugos would have used older German stamps to mark them, and that puts the lie to some claims the numbers don't have the right font characteristics. At any rate, we took a look at the rifle as it was, not from the viewpoint of the conflicting opinions online.

One thing is for sure, this rifle has all nice stuff throughout. The barrel is pristine. The stock is in excellent condition, as is the bluing. The accompanying certificate told us the stock was in fact "teakwood," not walnut. We wonder about that, but don't have any teak on hand to compare with it. It does look like photos of teak we've seen online. The wood is very hard, has some

decent grain, and has a dull finish of some sort. It seems to be a reasonable stock wood. All in all, we thought the rifle looked pretty good, and would make a fine display for some folks, whether or not it would satisfy every Mauser collector. Of course the intent is for it to be shot, so of course we shot it. We did that with three types of ammo, mil-spec hardball of unknown origin from 1983 with a 198-grain, steel-jacketed, boat-tail bullet; Remington 170-grain Core-Lokt SP; and PMC 170-grain PSP. We were going to try another mil-spec steel-case ammo from Romania, but it would not chamber. Here's what we found.

Although it looked mighty good, the rifle didn't have milled parts throughout. The trigger guard and floor plate were stampings. The forward stock-retention ring of the Mitchell M48 Mauser is one of the later, stamped and welded-up ones. Missing is the hole in the butt for removing the firing pin from the bolt sleeve. Early on, we found a problem that the buyers of these ought to address right from the start. The wrap-around or cup-like butt plate is polished steel, left in the white. There was apparently nothing much put on it to preserve it, maybe a wipe of Cosmoline, but not enough to protect it once the rifle is removed from its plastic wrapping. The butt plate began to rust almost immediately, and when we tested it in wet snow we really began to have problems. Our fix was to restore its look with Scotch-Brite and then put a heavy coat of wax on it to prevent rusting. We strongly advise you to do the same thing to actively prevent rusting of a major, highly visible, portion of this old rifle.

The rifle had the secondary locking screws on the action-retention bolts going through the trigger guard. The bolt handle was bent downward and the bottom of the knob was flattened. The bolt was in the white, as were the bolt shroud, firing pin cap, and the safety. The magazine follower was beveled to allow the bolt to run forward with the magazine

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empty. The left side of the action had “PREDUZECE 44” in Cyrillic letters, verifying its Yugoslav origin. The top of the front action ring had a nicely imprinted crest. Below that was “M 48A.”

The rear sight was, from what one collector told us, made to the pattern of an early German version, with the yardage markings (to 2000) on both the top and bottom. The front sight had a dust cover, which was nice to see. It aided our shooting efforts. The wood was like new with a dull finish that begged for some linseed oil. But if it is in fact teak, it might not take oil well. The trigger pull was two-stage, with some creep to the final pull. It broke at 6.5 pounds. We wiped the like-new bore and took it to the range.

Our first group was with the mil-spec ammo (unknown origin), and went into 2.3 inches at 100 yards from our bench rest. With the military ammo, the rifle printed right where it ought to have, dead center and a touch high with the rear sight all the way down. However, a problem showed up right away. The rifle would not reliably eject. It fed and fired perfectly, but the spent case just lay there, no matter how vigorously we worked the bolt handle. The ejector was not stuck in the Cosmoline, and it had good spring force. It protruded the correct amount (not much). The few cases that did eject just dribbled out of the rifle. A good Mauser will fling them far. On inspection we found that despite our initial cleaning, some odd crud remained inside the magazine box that apparently was flaking off and interfering with ejection. Once that was removed, ejection was as it ought to have been.

The two soft-nose commercial loads were much “softer” than the military version. We well recall the excellent surplus 8mm from several decades ago that was like new. It was mighty hot stuff, made in Canada and intended for the Bay of Pigs (never got there), and was not watered down like the commercial ammunition for these old rifles has to be these days.

The Remington ammo did give decent accuracy, but the PMC was nothing to write home about. Also, a 170-grain bullet at less than 2200 fps is a mighty light load for what, with the right fodder, can be a mighty rifle.

Our Team Said: We liked this rifle. All in

all, we couldn't fault it. We've seen much better — or perhaps we should say more desirable — military Mausers, but not within the past, oh, 40 years. If we wanted an excellent-condition, safe-to-shoot, Mauser made after the design of the late-war Wehrmacht's rifles, we'd buy this one.

REMINGTON 870 TACTICAL 81200 12 GAUGE, \$442
GUN TESTS GRADE: A (BEST BUY)
BEST IN CLASS SHOTGUN

Remington's proven 870 shotgun keeps on shooting, despite a number of cost-cutting measures, such as a plastic trigger-group housing, matte finish and synthetic hardware.



Action Type	Pump	Receiver	Steel
Overall Length	39 in.	Stock & Forend	Synthetic
Overall Height	5.25 in.	Sights	Bead Front Post
Capacity	6+1	Trigger Pull Weight	6.5 lbs.
Weight Unloaded	7.5 lbs.	Warranty	2 Years
Weight Loaded	8.3 lbs.	Telephone	(800) 243-9700
Barrel Length	18.5 in.	Website	Remington.com
Barrel	Steel	Made In	USA

The Remington 870 Tactical Model was supplied with a black synthetic stock and forend, a plastic trigger assembly, a six-round magazine, a bead front sight, and a muzzle brake that Remington calls a tactical choke. There is a slightly less expensive variant without the tactical choke. The 81198 version features rifle-like sights. The version tested features a receiver drilled and tapped for scope mounts. On an all-round defensive shotgun, the bead front sight did not bother us at all; in fact, we found it ideal for pointing at close-in targets.

Pointed teeth around the end of the muzzle brake were similar to the special door-breaching-braked shotguns used by the military. These jagged edges are intended to tear into a wooden door, break windows, and otherwise damage stuff, and the ports stabilize the muzzle during rapid firing. The synthetic

buttstock featured stippling at the grip that made for good adhesion. The synthetic forend looked skimpy compared to wide wooden forends, but it fit all our hands well and performed well in all testing with all raters. The Remington's dual action bars gave good, smooth cycling.

The safety was located at the rear of the trigger guard, and its operation was positive and sure. The Remington's safety location was easily manipulated by the shooter.

As we have done for some time, we began the test with Winchester birdshot, just to get the feel of handling the shotgun. The six-shot tubular magazine was easily loaded.

Our Team Said: The 870's 18.5-inch-long barrel handled quickly in close quarters with both reduced-power buckshot loads and full-power loads. Recoil was what we expected with full-power buckshot, but it wasn't harsh. There were no shooter-induced malfunctions, no short cycles, and no problems.

Among the other GUN TESTS recommended guns of the year is the Roessler Titan 6 bolt action made by Roessler Waffen and imported to the United States by TR Imports near Dallas (TRImports.com). That website has a good short video explaining the Titan rifles.

Roessler is a small, independent gun maker based in Kufstein, Austria. The company began in 1996 with the intent of building top-notch hunting rifles that incorporate innovation and a classic, hand-worked look. As noted, the company offers no fewer than 31 different calibers, from 222 to 375 Ruger. Half a dozen of the smaller ones utilize the Titan T3 action, with three bolt lugs. The remainder are in the T6 setup with its six-lug bolt.

The rifle has an aluminum receiver, available, like the barrels, in two finishes, black or silvery (stainless). The bolt locks into the back of the barrel, not into the receiver. This results in a light rifle with an exceptionally smooth bolt. Further, it permits for easy barrel changing. More on that later.

The stock appeared to be French walnut, though some of the information we managed to find indicates the wood is from Italy. The style is very much to our personal liking, though the average U.S. shooter might not like it, until he tries it on his shoulder. There is a Schnabel in contrasting rosewood. The main stock wood has sufficient grain to keep it well out of the “plank” category. The pistol-grip area is curved and well checkered so one can pull the rifle firmly into the shoulder to alleviate recoil. The recoil pad is slim but entirely sufficient in its design to have kept the rifle from hurting us when shot off the bench with hot 300 Win. Mag. loads with 180-grain bullets. The slight cast-off helps that, too.

The wood has an oiled finish, which makes it easy to repair nicks and dings that are relatively permanent in epoxy-finished stocks. There were sling-attachment points under the forearm and butt. The four panels

ROESSLER TITAN 6 LUXUS 300 WIN MAG. \$1980
GUN TESTS GRADE: A

While its Bavarian styling might not be for everyone, the Titan was easy on the shooter despite the rifle's light weight. We liked the fine walnut and its oil finish. The stock design allowed the shooter's head to be held high, and the slight castoff in the butt made for comfortable, easy shooting for our shooters.



Overall Length	47.2 in.	Barrel Finish	Blued
Barrel Length	26 in.	Magazine Type	Detachable
Sight Radius	n/a	Stock	Italian Walnut
Overall Height	8.5 in.	Trigger Pull Weight	2.0 lb.
LOP	14.5 in.	Warranty	5 years
Weight Unloaded, no scope	7.0 lb.	Telephone (TR Imports)	(866) 419-6271
Weight Loaded	7.8 lb.	Website	TRImports.com
Weight Scoped (4X Leupold)	7.7 lb.	Made in	Austria
Capacity	3 Rounds	Extra 270 Win. Barrel	\$407
Action Finish	Black Anodized	Extra 270 Win. Bolt	\$368
Action Type	Bolt		

of checkering were of excellent quality. Fit and finish were excellent everywhere we looked. With an all-up weight of 7.8 pounds with our 4X Leupold attached, we expected the rifle to kick us severely. That did not happen, not from the bench nor while standing. Yes, the barrel rose in recoil significantly when we were standing and shooting the 300 Win. Mag. loads, but the stock design, combined with the good recoil pad, caused us no discomfort.

The barrel length for the 300 Win. Mag. was a full 26 inches, so it got the maximum out of the loads. The 270 had a 22-inch length. Changing barrels was extremely easy.

Testament to the Titan's system was that our shots were still on the paper, the impact having moved maybe 5 inches down from the change of barrels. The 270 set up performed perfectly, with one of our groups going just under an inch. We happily noted that the rifle preferred the heavier 270 bullets over the 130-grain ones, which matches our own preferences in that caliber.

On the range, the rifle performed

flawlessly. Feeding was as slick as we've experienced in any rifle. Ejection was by a plunger, and worked just fine. The extractor was reminiscent of the post-'64 Winchesters, a spring-loaded sliding catch. The movement of the bolt in its raceway was also glass-smooth. The trigger was absolutely a wonder. It's the best we've experienced since the Savage AccuTrigger, light, clean, crisp, zero overtravel.

Our Team Said: We think it's well worth the trouble of looking for the Roessler Titan 6 rifle. We found the Titan offers excellent performance and innovation in an attractive package, plus the option of changing calibers with the twist of a wrench.

Rleased to the general public in late 2014, the Citori Model 725 in 20 gauge follows a long tradition of Browning's ventures into the subgauge market.

This field shotgun is both quick and smooth in the handling department, measuring right at 43 inches long and weighing only 6 pounds. With a length of pull of 14.5 inches, the shotgun had a drop at the comb of 1.5

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BROWNING CITORI MODEL 725 NO. 0135306005
20 GAUGE OVER/UNDER, \$2470
GUN TESTS GRADE: A

The new kid on the block handles well and patterns like a dream.



Action Type	Over/Under	Buttstock Length of Pull	14.5 in.
Chamber Size	3 in.	Buttstock Drop @ Comb	1.5 in.
Overall Length	43 in.	Buttstock Drop @ Heel	2.6 in.
Capacity	2	Forearm	Checkered Walnut Gloss Oil (Grade II/III)
Weight (Unloaded)	6 lbs.	Front Bead	Ivory
Barrel Length	26 in.	Rear Bead	Ivory
Barrel	Polished Blued Steel, Chrome Lined	Rib Width	0.25 in.
Receiver	Low-Profile, Silver-Nitride Finish, Roll Engraving	Trigger	5 lbs. (Bottom & Top), Mechanical
Choke Tubes	Invector DS Flush-Fit, IC, M, F	Warranty	Limited
Stock	Checkered Walnut Gloss Oil (Grade II/III)	Telephone	(800) 333-3288
		Website	Browning.com
		Made In/Assembled In	Japan

inches and a drop at the heel of 2.6 inches. These dimensions are right on the average mark for an out-of-the-box shotgun, and our team had no problems adjusting to the fit.

Unlike the 12-gauge versions of the Model 725, there is no palm swell in the pistol grip. However, the thin grip with fine checkering was a pleasure to hold and handle. The same checking provides a high-quality grip on the forearm, which is in a modified Schnabel shape.

We really liked the 5-pound touch off of both of the Fire Lite mechanical triggers in the Model 725. Smooth and crisp, the trigger pull on a shotgun may not be as important as the touch off on a centerfire rifle, but a good pull does help put a pattern on targets.

On the clay target range, on the patterning board, and in the field, we found that the new Browning lived up to its advertising claims. Just a little quicker to move with its 26-inch barrel, the Model 725 smacked targets with authority and provided the best pattern when the smokepole was put through its paces on paper. At a range of 30 yards with the Modified choke, the new Browning

produced a nearly perfect 54-46 percent pattern (54 percent above the center and 46 percent below) with the pellet spread of the Winchester AA load nearly even across a 30-inch circle. Inside the 20-inch circle at the center of the target, there were 220 pellet hits (yes, we count them) for a solid center punch of 60 percent. This performance was the best of all our patterning tests.

With the Improved Cylinder choke, the Model 725 produced an identical 54-46 percent pattern, with 157 hits in the 20-inch circle for a 51-percent center punch.

Results with the Remington shotshell load were not quite as impressive, but were still quite good. The Modified choke produced a 40-60 percent pattern with 208 hits (58 percent) in the 20-inch center circle; and the Improved Cylinder choke produced a 42-58 percent pattern with 149 pellet hits (55 percent) in the 20-inch center circle.

Our Team Said: It is not a given that the new model on the block will outperform a seasoned veteran, but with the Model 725 in 20 gauge, that is exactly what occurred. The shotgun handled well on the clays course and excelled in the patterning stage of the test.

While the debate continues on about which firearm is the best combat handgun, the 1911 remains in the running, and, according to some, it stays at the top of the heap. The 1911 has many applications including target practice, competition, and self defense, of course.

Simple pride of ownership is never a bad reason to own a handgun, but personal defense remains the defining characteristic of the 1911 handgun. For many, the 1911 represents the best choice for repelling boarders or facing members of the criminal class.

For this task, the pistol has good features, including speed to an accurate first shot that is virtually unequalled, reliability, and accuracy. Also, the 1911 is thin enough for concealed carry. The problem is a full-size gun's profile and weight. The 1911 can be concealed effectively with proper holster selection, that isn't the question. The question is the comfort level the individual is willing to accept. For many of us, the steel-frame Commander with its 3/4-inch-shorter slide and barrel solves the problem. The Commander pistol is less likely to pinch the bottom when seated, and it is faster from the draw as well.

Reader Steven Mace of Arizona wrote us in April 2014 asking if we would consider testing a list of 1911A1 Commander-style pistols. He wrote, "If you or your staff has any experience with any of these pistols, I would appreciate any information that could be shared. Or, are there any plans to evaluate any of these pistols in the near future? My intent is to find and buy a 1911A1 for concealed carry for a person who is left-handed." His list of desired handguns included the Colt XSE O4012XSE.

The Colt Commander XSE is Colt's top-end Commander. For a few hundred more dollars above the Remington R1 you get a full-length guide rod, Novak sights, forward cocking serrations, and nicely checkered custom-grade rosewood

COLT COMMANDER XSE 04012XSE 45 ACP, \$940
GUN TESTS GRADE: A

The Colt was consistently an accurate handgun with every load. Plus, the ambidextrous safety, forward cocking serrations, and frame cut gave the Colt a good feel and superior handling.



Action	Locked Breech Single-Action Semi-Auto, Series 80
Overall Length	7.75 in.
Overall Height	5.4 in.
Maximum Width	1.5 in.
Weight Unloaded	36 oz.
Weight Loaded	40.5 oz.
Barrel Length	4.25 in.
Barrel	Steel, 1:16 Twist

Capacity	8+1
Slide	Brushed Stainless Steel
Frame	Brushed Stainless Steel
Frame Front Strap Height	2.6 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.2 in.
Grips	Double Diamond Checked Rosewood
Grip Thickness (max)	1.3 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.4 in.
Rear Sight	Steel, Two White Dot, Novak Carry
Front Sight	Steel, One White Dot, Novak Carry
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	6.0 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.5 in.
Safeties	Ambi Slide Lock; Upswept Beavertail Grip
Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Website	Colt.com
Telephone	(800) 962-COLT (2658)
Made By/In	Colt's Mfg./USA

grips. The hammer was a lightweight skeletonized version which we often find on higher-end guns.

Though it may not seem like it, it's easy for a pistol to make a good first impression on us, and the Colt did just that. When checking sight regulation at the start of our firing phase, we shot the Colt Commander pistol off a bench rest at 15 yards. The rater fired three rounds to test the relationship between the sight picture and point of impact, then he walked to the target. Result: Two rounds in the same hole and the other very close and directly on point of aim. That's a good start.

The Colt Commander's ambidextrous safety can be used by both righties and lefties, or as an either/or tactical choice for users who might be injured and have to switch to opposite-handed firing. Trigger compression was clean with no creep or backlash at 6.0 pounds, one pound more than the Remington.

During disassembly, we noted the barrel bushing fit was tight, and the barrel locking lugs were well fitted.

We saw little lateral play in-the-slide-to-frame fit. The slide-lock safety and the grip safety each exhibited positive function.

The Colt featured a cut out just under the trigger guard that slightly

lowers the bore axis, resulting in a better fit for some shooters.

Our Team Said: This was among the most accurate Commander pistols we have tested. After firing 250 rounds without a malfunction, we deem the Colt Commander XSE to be an excellent choice for personal defense. The goal of many shooters is to be able to defend themselves and their loved ones, and some training should follow this decision. But training is easier, more effective, and more fun with a tool like the Colt XSE.

The avid woodsman or outdoorsman, be he/she hunter, hiker, camper, or what have you, has certain necessary items that must always be packed along on the trail. Many of us also want a pistol, such as Ruger's new 22/45 Lite in 22 LR. The new blue Ruger looks like a Buck Rogers pistol with its cutaway barrel and Picatinny-like top rail. The gun is also available with a Cobalt, or gray, finish with holes drilled in the barrel shroud instead of the deep cuts of our test sample, but the Cobalt one does not come with a sight rail. We see the blue Ruger as a light, efficient, outdoorsman's pistol, so the idea of sticking a scope on it was not for us. Yet we recognize that many shooters

RUGER 22/45 LITE 3908 22 LR, MSRP \$515
GUN TESTS GRADE: A

With its 1911-like grip that is essentially the same size as the big 45s, the new blue Ruger fit our 45 holsters. All the controls are in the same places as found on the 1911 45s.



Overall Length	8.4 in.
Overall Height	5.5 in.
Barrel Length	4.4 in.
Weight Unloaded	22.8 oz.
Weight Loaded	24.0 oz.
Capacity	10+1

Maximum Width	1.1 in.
Grip Thickness	1.1 in.
Grip Circumference	5.2 in.
Frame	Black Polymer
Barrel	Stainless Inside Aluminum
Grip	Black Polymer
Front Strap Height	2.7 in.
Back Strap Height	3.5 in.
Trigger Pull Weight	4.6 lbs.
Trigger Span	3.2 in.
Sight Radius	6.5 in.
Warranty	None Written
Telephone	(603) 865-2442
Website	Ruger.com
Made In/By	U.S./Sturm, Ruger

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need that option. For fun and because we could, we tried the rail with a 30X Weaver target scope on it, but for the bulk our testing, we took off the scope and the top rail, which was attached with three short screws. We appreciate that Ruger makes it easy to mount a scope on the blue pistol, but with the rail, the gun would not fit into a Bachman Slide holster. With the rail off, the gun fit nicely.

The pistol came with a soft zippered case and two magazines, plus an Allen wrench to remove or tighten the top rail. We noted the gun will not fire with the magazine removed. It is also possible to work the bolt with the safety in the On position, so one can load and unload the chamber with an added degree of security. There was a key for the integral action lock. The 22/45 Lite was made exceptionally well, and it always worked properly.

As most readers know, the grip angle of the Ruger 22/45 is essentially identical to the Colt 1911 pattern. The controls to release the magazine and operate the safety are in the same places as on the big 45s. The Ruger's frame is Zytel polymer. The front grip strap is horizontally serrated and the rear strap is checkered. The side panels are rubber. Grips from the Ruger Commander reviewed previously looked like they might fit, but they didn't.

We shot the Ruger using its excellent adjustable sights — they gave a perfect sight picture for our eyes — using Federal Gold Medal Premium Match, Eley Tenex Ultimate EPS match, Blazer, and CCI MiniMags. We had trouble with the Eley match ammo, which did not want to feed reliably in this brand-new pistol. We'll try it again after more rounds have gone through the Ruger, but we can't dun the new pistol for that. The Eley ammo's recoil is exceptionally light, which seemed to have been the problem. The Tenex bullets came out at about 900 fps, and all the other ammo including the Federal Match was significantly faster.

At 50 feet with the iron sights, we shot our very best group with Blazer

rimfire rounds, 0.6 inch. That ammo averaged under an inch, the best of this test, followed by the Federal Gold Medal and Tenex average groups, 1.4 inches, and the MiniMags at 1.2 inches. A long-eye-relief, low-power scope or any of the floating-dot sights would be ideal for those whose eyesight requires help.

Other than the too-light ammo in a

crisp new gun, we had no trouble at all with the Ruger. Its trigger pull was excellent, crisp and clean. It broke at 4.6 pounds. We noted how easy it was to get pinched by the closing bolt, so rather than ease it forward with our fingers, we simply took to letting its own spring slam it closed.

Our Team Said: We would buy the Ruger 22/45 Lite for most of our smallbore needs.

BERETTA A400 XPLORE ACTION J40AA88 28 GAUGE, \$1550

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

Very responsive with rapid cycling, this handsome shotgun was a pleasure to shoot. Dense patterns indicated greater long-range capability than one might expect.



Action Type	Gas-Operated, Semi-Automatic	Buttstock Length of Pull	14.5 in.
Chamber Size	2.75 in.	Buttstock Drop @ Comb	1.35 in.
Overall Length	48.5 in.	Buttstock Drop @ Heel	1.9 in.
Capacity	2+1	Forearm	Walnut Checkered
Weight Unloaded	5.4 lbs.	Front Bead	Fiber-Optic
Barrel Length	28.0 in.	Rear Bead	NA
Barrel	Blue	Rib Width	0.20 in.
Receiver	Bronze Anodized Alloy	Trigger	5.5 lbs.
Choke Tubes	Full, Modified, Cylinder Bore	Warranty	1 Year (3 Years with registration)
Stock	Walnut Checkered	Telephone	(800) 929-2901
		Website	BerettaUSA.com
		Made In/Assembled In	Italy

A sub-gauge semi-auto shotgun we liked this year was the Beretta A400 Excel Action, which we acquired from the Pro Shop at American Shooting Centers in Houston (AMShootCenters.com). The Beretta shotgun arrived in a lockable takedown hard case that was well made but was probably not substantial enough for air travel. If there was any doubt why this shotgun cost so much, this notion was erased on first sight. The wood stocks showed a burl-like pattern of dark and light with a mild grainy texture. That the grain pattern was not all of one color and glossed meant the buttstock and forearm had to be fashioned from the same section of wood for it to match. The pistol grip

was checkered in three contours on each side. The forearm was wrapped with checkering, and the underside featured the Beretta emblem of three arrows inside an oval.

Additional contours to the stock included a relief leading from the lower edge of the buttstock, a significant narrowing before the pistol grip, and a shallow relief forming a grip along both sides of the forearm. The buttstock offered a solidly mounted swivel stud. Forward connection for the sling swivel was at the top of the magazine cap. A set of detachable sling loops was supplied. The A400 Xplore Action shotguns typically feature a compressible recoil-reduction system installed within the buttstock. But when chambered for the milder 28-gauge

ammunition, recoil is handled only by a buttpad composed of open-cell polymer foam. One option that was available was a shorter 26-inch barrel, which would make it even lighter and more compact for an easy day in the field.

The supplied choke tubes were Beretta's Optimachoke configuration. The receiver was a bronze color, and its topside was machined with four mounting points, specifically for Beretta's proprietary scope rings. Seated flush on the left side of the receiver was the magazine cutoff switch. Pushing one side inward, this enabled the shooter to pull back the bolt and eject a live round without drawing a fresh round from the magazine. It also allowed the elevator to be pushed upward so that the magazine can be unloaded manually. For where it is required by law, a stainless-steel magazine plug that turned the Beretta into a single shot was supplied. Cycling was achieved by gas vented from a small cylinder driving a short-stroke piston with enough pressure to drive the rotating bolt. This system was also designed to drive out debris, keeping the cylinder clean.

The Beretta trigger had virtually no creep and little if any discernible take-up. We would compare it to the type of trigger that might be found on a match rifle, but our scales told us that the pull weight registered a full 5.5 pounds. Measured repeatedly, trigger-pull weight did not vary.

The Beretta was shipped with two plastic shims and a steel connector plate that can be applied so that the stock is cast for right- or left-handed shooters as well as for a range of drop angles. The pistol grip was neutral in terms of palm swell or other contour, and the gun arrived cast for a right-hand shooter. At the pattern board we learned that the shot was very close to 50/50. This means that about half the pellets hit the target above our point of aim. The Estate 2.75-inch 7½ shot Super Sport Competition Target load showed a tight pattern, with many hits overlapping. Certainly, we could have changed to a lighter

constriction for the Skeet field.

After several rounds of skeet, our shooters agreed that the Winchester ammunition was the best choice. Looking back at our HunterJohn pattern targets, we found that preference for the Winchester rounds could have been predicted by the results. While all three test rounds produced solid patterns, the Winchester target showed its primary density described nearly a perfect circle, even as the shot pattern thinned toward the edges.

The 28-gauge Xplore Action weighed in at only 5.4 pounds, and

with the 28-inch-long barrel, we expected the gun to be whippy. But the Beretta felt rigid once shouldered, more like a rifle than a lightweight shotgun. Yet not one shooter on our staff or any of our guest shooters complained about discomfort from recoil. Our most experienced skeet shooter noted that with the smaller pattern of the lesser gauge, you really had to be right on.

Our Team Said: The 28-gauge Beretta Xplore Action shotgun sets a high standard. Not only is it a very handsome shotgun, but its cycling impulse was much less apparent than other self-loading shotguns we've tried.

**SPRINGFIELD ARMORY LOADED TARGET PI9134LP
9MM LUGER, \$873
GUN TESTS GRADE: A**

Function of the Loaded Model was flawless. The pistol features stainless construction, always a plus in a tactical handgun. The forward cocking serrations and ambidextrous safety are helpful for tactical shooting. The Loaded pistol's nice trigger made the deal for us.

Action	Locked Breech, Single-Action Semi-Auto
Overall Length	8.5 in.
Overall Height	5.3 in.
Maximum Width	1.5 in.
Weight Unloaded	40 oz.
Weight Loaded	44 oz.
Barrel	5.0 in. Long, 1:16 Twist; Match-Grade Stainless Steel; Supported Ramp
Recoil System	2-Piece National Match, Full-Length Guide Rod
Magazines	(2) 9-Rd. Stainless Steel
Slide	Forged Stainless Steel; w/Matte Rounds; Polished Flats; Front & Rear Serrations
Frame	Forged Stainless Steel; w/Matte Rounds; Polished Flats
Frame Front Strap Height	2.6 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.2 in.
Grips	Cross Cannon Double Diamond Checked Rosewood



Grip Thickness (max)	1.5 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.5 in.
Rear Sight	Elevation & Windage Adjustable
Front Sight	Post, Dovetailed
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	5.0 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.4 in.
Safety	Slide Lock, Grip
Warranty	Lifetime
Made In	Geneseo, Ill.
Made By	Springfield Armory
Telephone	(800) 680-6866
Website	Springfield-Armory.com

The Springfield Loaded Model Target is a logical extension of the successful Loaded Model line. The pistol was well fitted, well finished, and overall was an attractive handgun. For an

additional \$169 dollars in the Loaded Model, you get forward cocking serrations, a full-length guide rod, stainless-steel construction, and an ambidextrous safety. The right-hand slide-lock lever (for left-handed

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shooters) of the Loaded Model safety was well designed and supported by the stocks, we saw.

The Loaded 9mm Stainless Steel has a polished finish on the flat surfaces and bead-blasted matte finish on the rounded areas. The 5-inch barrel is a match-grade stainless steel unit. The slide features slanted serrations on the front and rear. The mainspring housing is flat and includes the company's integral locking system, or I.L.S., which replaces the mainspring housing of the handgun. When engaged, the I.L.S. prevents the hammer from moving by locking the mainspring cap, making the gun inoperable. Elsewhere, the pistol has a lightweight Delta hammer and a beavertail grip safety with raised memory pad for positive engagement. The extended thumb safety is ambidextrous, and it has a long aluminum match-grade trigger. The pistol is fitted with a two-piece full-length guide rod. The grips are held in place with Torx grip screws.

To our eyes, the biggest advantage of the Loaded Target was its stainless-steel construction, an obvious plus for a hard-use pistol to be worn in all types of weather. The full-length guide rod (FLGR) is sometimes criticized as adding to the complexity of field stripping. However, the FLGR also prevents the pistol from going out of battery when jammed against the barricade and may be an aid when firing heavy loads.

When the sum of the advantages of the Loaded Model are added up, it seemed to us that it was a pistol better suited for tactical use. The forward cocking serrations, full-length guide rod, and stainless-steel construction are good to have. The ambidextrous safety is a help to allow use of the handgun by either hand. A left-handed shooter would prefer the set up even more.

With a mix of 40 FIOCCHI 115-grain Extrema rounds, 35 HPR 124-grain XTPs, 25 FIOCCHI 124-grain JHPs, and 40 Winchester 115-grain USA cartridges, there were no failures to feed, chamber, fire, or eject. During testing of sight regulation and the


ability of the sights to be zeroed, we also used the FIOCCHI 92-grain hollowpoint. All proved reliable, as did the FIOCCHI 147-grain XTP. These sights are fully the equal of any we have tested from any maker, including the Bo-mar sight.

The lighter trigger compression

of the Loaded Model was deemed an advantage. The most accurate loading in the Loaded was the Hornady 147-grain XTP, with the best effort being a 1.6-inch group.

Our Team Said: For the tactical shooter, the practical advantages of the stainless Loaded Target make it a great buy.

KIMBER MICRO CARRY ADVOCATE 380 ACP \$796
GUN TESTS GRADE: A-
The Kimber was well finished and demonstrated excellent reliability and accuracy. It also fit in a pocket.



		Slide	Steel
		Magazine	6 Rd. Detachable Box
		Frame	Aluminum w/Carry Melt Treatment
		Frame Front Strap Height	1.6 in.
		Frame Back Strap Height	2.25 in.
		Grips	G10, Brown
		Grip Thickness (max)	1 in.
		Grip Circumference (max)	4.62 in.
Action	Locked Breech	Sights	3-Dot Tritium
	Single Action Semi-Auto	Sight Radius	3.9 in.
Overall Length	5.6 in.	Trigger Pull Weight	8.75 lbs., Solid Alum.
Overall Height	4.0 in.	Trigger Span Single Action	2.1 in.
Maximum Width	1.1 in.	Safety	Frame-Mounted Lever
Weight Unloaded	13.8 oz.	Warranty	1 year
Weight Loaded	16.0 oz.	Telephone	(888) 243-4522
Barrel	2.75 in., Stainless Steel 1:16 LH Twist; Ramped	Website	KimberAmerica.com
		Made In/By	NY, Kimber USA

The Kimber Micro Carry Advocate Brown 380 ACP, \$700, isn't as close to the 1911 template as some others.

Close enough for intuitive handling if you are familiar with the 1911, but the details differ greatly. These differences may be a deal breaker in either direction. If you do not like the 1911 grip safety, the Kimber is your choice.

Elsewhere, the Kimber we tested was well made and finished, with a blue-steel slide and anodized-aluminum frame. The checkered wooden grips were very attractive. The Kimber was supplied in a padded case with a spare 7-round magazine with finger extension, but the magazine we used for our measurements was a 6-round design.

The sights were good combat

sights, three-dot sights with tritium inserts, a big advantage on a personal defense pistol. The Kimber uses the internal extractor common to other 1911 handguns. However, the Kimber does not use a grip safety. With a pistol bordering on tiny, a grip safety would have been difficult to incorporate into the design.

The frame of the Kimber extended in a generous beavertail tang that aided in comfortable firing. The hammer of the Kimber rides deeply in the slide, which will be a good thing if shooters opt to carry the pistol with the hammer down while in the pocket. The pistol disassembled much the same as any other 1911, except that the pistol featured a metal one-piece guide rod and wound recoil spring. The Kimber also uses the angled camming surfaces of the Browning

type instead of the 1911 swinging link. When the pistol is disassembled, there is a loaded spring under the slide stop to maintain pressure on the stop. Reassembly isn't hard, but the small wire ejector must be depressed.

There was no magazine safety. Few American-designed pistols use the magazine safety, and no service pistol that we are aware of in use in this country still uses a magazine safety. The Kimber featured a positive firing pin block. The slide-lock safety, well, isn't a slide-lock safety. The thumb safety does not lock the slide. This allows loading the pistol with the safety on. On this subject, we found the safety to be a positive. While carrying the pistol cocked and locked in the pocket, the safety never rode off its indent. Just the same, the raters reached a consensus that each would probably carry the pistol in the pocket hammer down. In a proper, well-made pocket holster, cocked and locked is viable, and every pocket pistol should be carried in a holster. The safety may be applied with the hammer down, which doesn't have much value. Do not move the safety to the on position with the slide off the frame, or the safety may fall out of the frame.

A feature of the Kimber we did not like was the heavy trigger. The trigger operated with minimal take-up followed by firm consistent pressure, but it broke at 8.75 pounds when the company claims it should be set to 7.0 pounds. Just the same, we did great shooting with the pistol.


To get started, we lubricated the Kimber and then loaded both magazines with Black Hills Ammunition 100-grain ball ammo. We concentrated on the magazine without the finger rest during control testing, as this is the magazine we think most shooters will be carrying in the pistol. The advantage in

control, if any, was slight with the larger magazine. By the same token, the extra height did not seem to adversely affect concealed carry. The Kimber proved tractable and gave good results in short-range drills. When firing off the bench for best accuracy, the heavy trigger was more of a challenge than in combat shooting. All raters commented that the pistol was easy to fire quickly and to keep on target, probably because of the light recoil of the 380 ACP cartridge. When firing the first few groups, we registered a number of

4- and 5-inch groups at 15 yards, definitely in the pocket-pistol class of not-so-hot accuracy. Finally, after some effort, we were able to print a number of groups in the 3-inch class. The best group came with the Hornady 90-grain FTX, which shot a 2.5-inch cluster at 15 yards.

Our Team Said: The Kimber costs somewhere around \$800, depending on where you shop. Part of the cost is seen in the Advocate's superior fit and finish, tritium sights, and a spare magazine. It would have earned a straight A grade except for its too-heavy trigger.

LWRCI M6A2 GAS PISTON CARBINE M6A2R6B16
6.8 SPC, \$2250
GUN TESTS GRADE: A
This is a well-put-together gun with heavy-duty components.



Action Type	Semi-Automatic Short-Stroke Gas Piston; LWRCI Nickel Coating	Length of Pull	11.4 to 14.5 in.
Overall Length (Min/Max)	33.5 to 36.5 in.	Handguard	Quadrail w/ 3 Polymer Covers
Overall Height	10.25 in.	Magazine	(3) Barrett 30 Round
Weight Unloaded	8.2 lbs.	Rear Sight	LWRCI Folding BUIS
Weight Loaded	9.5 lbs.	Front Sight	LWRCI Folding BUIS
Upper Receiver	Midlength Free Float Rail; Low-Profile Gas Block	Sight Radius	Up to 14.25 in.
Lower Receiver	Black Aluminum Alloy, Magpul MIAD Grip	Trigger	7.5 lbs., Mil-Spec Single Stage
Barrel	41V45 Steel Alloy; Match Grade, 16.1 in., 1:10 RH Twist, Target Crown	Safety	Left Side 2-Pos. Lever
Muzzle Device	A2 Birdcage 5/8x24 TPI	Cartridge Case Deflector	Yes
Buttstock	Black VLTOR EMod, Adj. 4-Pos.	Dust Cover	Yes
		Warranty	Limited Lifetime
		Telephone	(410) 901-1348
		Website	LWRCI.com
		Made In/By	Maryland/LWRCI
		Not Available	CA, CT, DC, HI, MD, MA, NJ, NY

The 6.8 SPC round, topped with appropriate hunting bullets, is currently being used in the field to harvest deer, hogs, and other large game. Thus, our

interest in testing the LWRCI M6A2. The 6.8 SPC is a cartridge that pushes the performance envelope for the AR-15 platform. Over time, there have been several specifications

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published for the chamber, with a great deal of discussion regarding the compatibility between the different specifications. However, the available data shows the differences between chamber specs are minimal, so compatibility should not be a problem in most cases.

The LWRC International M6 series rifles are rotary-bolt, magazine-fed, air-cooled, self-loading designs chambered in 5.56x45mm NATO and 6.8x43mm SPC. Our test unit was the M6A2 version, which has a low-profile gas block with a mid-length quad rail and heavy-duty polymer rail covers. The M6A2 retains about an 80% parts commonality with the direct-impingement carbine.


The LWRC International M6A2U6B16 ships standard with a box and one 30-round magazine. Our private-sale gun, \$1499, came with three mags, however.

LWRCI says its patented self-regulating short-stroke gas-piston system eliminates the venting of hot, carbon-laden gases into the receiver and bolt carrier group, thus eliminating the intensive cleaning regime of the "legacy" rifle. We found the LWRCI M6 easily field stripped and cleaned like any other piston AR. As is common with piston-driven rifles, the bolt showed little carbon fouling. A normal amount of carbon and copper fouling was in the bore.

Another supposed benefit of the company's short-stroke gas-piston system is improved handling characteristics, lighter recoil, and reduced muzzle rise. On our first testing day, our team started shooting the SSA 115 OTM with no failures, and our team commented on the rifle's even pulse and mild recoil. It was slightly more than a 5.56 round,

**MAKO GROUP FAB DEFENSE SURVIVAL BUTTSTOCK
GL-MAG, \$122; AND MONOPOD BUTTSTOCK
ADD-ON MBA, \$97
GUN TESTS GRADE: A
BEST IN CLASS ACCESSORY**

The Survival Buttstock was very comfortable against the shoulder and cheek. The addition of the flat surface supplied by the magazine basepad located at the rear of the buttstock helped when shooting prone or from a bench. Also stored one standard AR-15 magazine. The Add-On is a separate buttpad with a two-stage adjustable-height monopod. The Monopod Buttstock



Add-on adds about 1.2 inches in stock length and is an easy slip-on install. The monopod is adjustable, with two stages of extension.

we thought. We had no failures with the SSA 85-grain frangible and noted the same even pulse and mild recoil, which we thought was no more than a 5.56 round. The Hornady 110-grain V-Max likewise had no failures and felt the same as the SSA 115s. The brass fell in a 6-foot circle behind and to the right of the shooter.

What we found with the M6A2 was a well equipped unit with an extensive rail system, rail covers, back up iron sights (BUIS) and a heavy-duty collapsible stock. Despite the weight, the rifle was well balanced and shot well from a variety of field positions. The rifle gave off a general sense of quality. The fit was tight and the finish showed consistent coloration. The controls were smooth and positive. The rifle was provided with three magazines manufactured by Barrett, which were clearly marked on the

outside with the caliber. They locked and ejected easily. The bolt and bolt carrier were particularly nice, with a The LWRCI showed a preference for the Silver State Armory ammunition, shooting the 85-grain frangible lead-free bullets into 1.4-inch average groups and the 115-grain OMT into 1.6-inch average groups. The Hornady ammo lagged at 2.0 inches. The rifle proved completely reliable with boxed ammunition.

The Magpul MIAD grip was comfortable, and its adjustable backstraps made individual fitting possible. Up top, any Mil Std 1913 accessory can be mounted to the rail, and because the rail is monolithic, the shooter can bridge devices from the receiver to the rail.

Our Team Said: This is a well-built, reasonably accurate 6.8 SPC-chambered rifle suitable for hunting. **GT**

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GUN TESTS VALUE GUIDE: SNUBNOSE REVOLVERS (MULTIPLE CHAMBERINGS)

GUN NAME	ISSUE	GRADE & COMMENTS
Smith & Wesson M325PD 45 ACP, \$700-\$925	July 2015	Grade B-: The 325PD makes sense if you need a hideout revolver chambered in 45 ACP.
Smith & Wesson PC M625-10 45 ACP, \$1200-\$1400	July 2015	Grade F: A cracked frame forced us to eliminate it from consideration for safety reasons.
Smith & Wesson PC M627 170133 357 Magnum, \$1079	April 2015	Grade A: Well-made, nice-shooting revolver. Ball-detent lock up, chamfered chambers, excellent sights.
Smith & Wesson M686 357 Mag- num, \$600-\$850 (Used)	April 2015	Grade A: Well-designed six-shot revolver. Team members liked the slender 686 even though it had less capacity.
Smith & Wesson PC M327 170245 357 Magnum, \$1309	April 2015	Grade B: Needed a different grip to be concealed carried. Short ejector rod hindered fast reloads.
FN Barracuda 357 Magnum 3-in., \$450-\$750 (Used)	March 2015	Grade B+: On the edge of "snubbie." Would have moved up a grade if the 9mm cylinder had been included.
Smith & Wesson PC M629-8 44 Magnum, \$900-\$1000	Nov 2014	Grade A: Ported 3-inch barrel, compact grip made this a concealable N-frame our testers really liked.
S&W M329PD IV150545 Alaska Backpacker 44 Mag, \$750-\$900	Nov 2014	Grade B: Most pleasant of the 44 Magnums to shoot; nice compromise of weight and firepower.
Smith & Wesson PC M657-5 41 Magnum, \$750-\$850	Nov 2014	Grade B: A snappy shooter in 41 Magnum, its 2.6-inch barrel showed less recoil than the 44 Magnums.
Smith & Wesson M60 #178013 3-in. Barrel 357 Magnum, \$799	Sept 2014	Grade A: Light and thin but packs plenty of power. Adjustable night sights are helpful for carry.
Ruger SP101 Model 5718 357 Magnum, \$659	Sept 2014	Grade A: Traditional snubnose. Felt solid in hand, wore a glare-free finish, was snag-free and accurate.
Ruger SP101 #5759 (3-in. barrel) 327 Federal Magnum, \$600-\$800	Sept 2014	Grade A-: Added capacity and adjustable rear sight. Limited ammo availability must be a concern.
Ruger LCR No. 5401 38 Special +P, \$529	Nov 2013	Grade A-: Polymer skin is a leap from a traditional DAO. Trigger was smooth and easy to use. Recoil was nil.
Smith & Wesson M42 150502 38 Special +P, \$635-798	Nov 2013	Grade B-: Difficult for many shooters to shoot well. Easy to hide, though.
Smith & Wesson M638 Airweight 163070 38 Special, \$459	March 2013	Grade A-: Smaller, narrower grip, but a good choice as a backup due to light weight and small size.
Charter Arms Pitbull 9mm 79920 9mm Luger, \$465	March 2013	Grade A-: Largest of the revolvers in the test and most accurate. Operates without moon clips.
Charter Arms Police Undercover No. 73840 38 Special, \$402	March 2013	Grade D: Almost a copy of the Pitbull, so the Undercover felt good. Had no grooves in the barrel, however.

Log on to Gun-Tests.com to read complete reviews of these products.

COMING UP IN GUN TESTS

- Got a new Glock 42? How about a holster for it? We test Cooks IWB, Jason Winnie, Jeremiah, JM Custom Kydex, PJ Pocket Holster, UC Stealth, Wright pocket holster, and ZZZ.
- Higher-Retention Holsters: We test Hogue Incorporated's ARS Stage One Carry, Galco's M4X and M6X, Blackhawk's GripBreak and the Evader from Bianchi. In addition we tested three holsters from DeSantis, the Facilitator, the Quick Safe, and the Prowler. Also included were a trio of holsters from Safariland; The 578 ProFit (Long and Standard) and the 6378 ALS, and Blade Tech's WRS Level 3.
- Head to Head: Hammerless Lightweight 38 Specials: Charter Arms Off Duty goes against a Taurus Ultra Light.
- 45 Ammo Comparison: We test cartridges in grain weights of 150, 160, 165, 185, 200, 220, and 230 from DRT, Buffalo Bore, Cor-Bon, Federal, ASYM, Barnes, Black Hills, Hornady, Remington, Winchester, Fiocchi, and Speer.
 - XD Mod.2 Sub Compacts Go Head to Head: 9mm vs. 45 ACP.
 - 22 LR Copies of Famous Tactical Rifles: HK M416D, STG-44, HKMP5SD, M1 Carbine, Colt M4 carbine, S&W M&P 15-22.
 - How Accurate Is the AK? We find out by shooting Tula, Wolf, Winchester, Fiocchi, Remington, Hornady, and Cor-Bon rounds in weights of 122, 123, and 150 grains.
 - Canik Vs. Diamondback 9mms: Newcomer handguns butt heads.
 - Two Bisley Revolvers in 38 Special/357 Magnum: Ruger Bisley Vaquero and Uberti Cattleman Bisley.
 - 357 Magnum Self-Defense Rounds: Weights of 100, 110, 125, 130, and 145 from Cor-Bon, Winchester, Federal, Black Hills, Hornady, and Buffalo Bore.
 - Box-Mag 12 Gauges: Russian Saiga versus Chinese Saiga.
 - Optics-Ready Longslide 9mm Striker-Fire Pistols: We shoot the S&W M&P9 Performance Center Ported and Glock G34 Gen4 MOS with a Leupold Delta optic.
 - 9mm Revolvers, Ruger LCR versus Taurus.
 - American-made AK-47s: PSAK-47 MOE Edition takes on a Century Arms RAS47.
 - Head to Head: 44 Mag Single-Action Revolvers with Adjustable Sights: Ruger Super Blackhawk and Uberti Callahan Target.
 - And see readers' comments in Firing Line...

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