

# GUN<sup>®</sup>TESTS

THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

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## 9MM HANDGUN SHOWDOWN

We finally get a SIG Sauer P365 to the range, and it's okay. The other pistols tested against it were the Stoeger STR-9, Arex Rex Delta, and Ruger Security-9, two of which we consider to be better buys.

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## 22 LR REPLICAS

Our test group included two rimfire semi-autos from Walther, the HK MP5 A5 and Colt M4. The others were the Chiappa Arms M1 Carbine and GSG's StG44. One rifle was truest to the original, as well as practical and fun.

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## DRIVING HOLSTERS COMPARED

We look for the best holsters for driving, sitting for long periods, and by extension, riding a horse or motorcycle. We find a number of good choices, though some are pricey. ● Page 27



## NEW RULING WILL BAKE YOUR NOODLE

**O**n October 24, 2019, Franklin Armory filed suit in the U.S. District Court for the State of New Jersey challenging actions of the New Jersey State Police, which had outlawed sale of Franklin Armory's Reformation series of firearms. The Reformation has rifling-like straight grooves inside the barrel bore that allowed Franklin to get around the Reformation being designated as either a rifle or a shotgun. Avoiding both designations were important because the gun's 7-inch or 11.5-inch barrels would make the Reformation classifiable under the National Firearms Act as either short-barreled rifles or short-barreled shotguns. And the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATFE) supplied a letter to Franklin Armory to that effect, saying the Reformation wasn't an NFA item. Didn't matter to NJ officials: They banned the Reformation anyway, so Franklin Armory sued, which led to BATFE jumping back in to clear things up.

On December 19, 2019, BATFE issued an "Open Letter regarding the Franklin Armory Reformation Firearm." It will bake your noodle:

*The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) has received questions from industry members and the general public regarding a new type of firearm produced by the Franklin Armory®. This firearm, known as the "Reformation", utilizes a barrel that is produced with straight lands and grooves. This design contrasts with conventional rifling, in which the barrel's lands and grooves are spiral or twisted, and are designed to impart a spin onto the projectile.*

*The ATF Firearms and Ammunition Technology Division (FATD) has examined the Reformation firearm for purposes of classification under the applicable provisions of the Gun Control Act (GCA) and the National Firearms Act (NFA). During this examination, FATD determined that the straight lands and grooves incorporated into the barrel design of the Reformation do not impart a spin onto a projectile when fired through the barrel. Consequently, the Reformation is not a "rifle" as that term is defined in the GCA and NFA. Moreover, because the Reformation is not chambered for shotgun shells, it is not a shotgun as defined in the NFA. Given these determinations, the Reformation is classified as a shotgun that is subject only to the provisions of the GCA (i.e., it is not a weapon subject to the provisions of the NFA).*

— continued on page 31



**Todd Woodard**

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REMEMBER: FIREARMS SAFETY AND SECURITY BEGINS WITH YOU

# Buying One of the Boomers

*Reader Ryan appreciates the December review of the 460 Magnum from Smith & Wesson and looks forward to hunting. Reader Bruce checks in on Washington's background checks and a whole lot more.*

## Re "Firing Line," December 2019

Dear Mr. Woodard: I finally sat down to write, prompted by reader 2FINN's thoughts on our post-Initiative 1629 world here in Washington State. The background check (BC) now has to be performed by the local sheriff's office. Previously it was truly instant: The FFL called NICS, got a proceed, and done. There is no time requirement for the sheriff's office to do it, nor is there extra money for them to do it either. In my county, it took a week. Both the FFL and our good sheriff's office are working hard to still deliver these background checks in a timely manner. So, yeah, that's a bad thing. Oh, by the way, my 10/22 is now an assault rifle, but nobody is talking about that yet.

On the Universal Background Check front, I have asked several gun-store employees how much business they do on private-transfer BCs. The response was mixed. Some chortled, some giggled, and some just shook their heads and walked away. So, the answer was zero. None. Nobody comes in to get a BC done to pass a gun on to a son, to loan it to a friend for a hunt, or to buy it from a private party. Like the poor New Zealand "buyback" compliance, sensible people do the right thing when the law is stupid.

On other subjects from the last few issues:

A while back you wrote about "bling" on some shotguns. Really? Those were some of the most restrained versions of bling on a gun yet. Guns are available in all the colors of nature, plus some others. Almost any patriotic image can be had on the slide of your 1911. Full-scale battle scenes are

laser engraved across the stocks and barrels of WWII military-replica rifles and handguns. I am not condemning them, but they aren't for me. I'm past 65 now and am starting to have the "long view" of things. For a long time I have held out for wood and blue steel revolvers and bolt actions. However, just like the evolving English language that has bugged me for years, I have realized that just as even English can have new words, guns can take new shapes (and colors). And still be interesting and useful. But no more autoloaders for me, please. I like to hang on to my brass, you know?

On left-hand holsters: I am right handed, but I like holsters and your articles, so I read it. The Uncle Mike's Sidekick line that you

mention is one I find very useful. Only a few of my handguns need an expensive leather holster, but all of my guns need a belt holster for range use. The Sidekick can fit almost any gun for around \$12. Nylon holsters have come a long way, too.

Electronic powder measures: When a company decides to expand into an area that they have no prior experience in, one may expect problems. Several years ago I purchased Hornady's version of the genre. I developed a love-hate relationship with it. I relied on it, it was fast and easy with some powders, but the quirks in the programming were maddening. One day last month it just died. I bought two other examples of Hornady electronic tech. The first

## 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.



was also love-hate, a strip of LEDs to be mounted inside the reloading press. When it worked, I loved it; when it didn't I hated it. The third item is the company's Case Trim Duo. So far I just love it — no, I hate it — so I hope it has a longer life than the first two.

Glad to see you again ably filling the editor slot for the *Cartridges of the World 16th Edition*.

I hope the folks affected by that terrible chemical-plant fire near you are recovering from that disaster. Finally, recent events have thrust Rep. Al Green into notoriety, and I became aware of him. They say he represents Houston? Anyway, what a character you have to put up with down there. — **Bruce**

*Thank you, Bruce. It was inevitable that the 10/22 would get some negative state attention somewhere. Rep. Al Green is something we have to tolerate around here.* — **Todd Woodard**

Just read the December 2019 letter from Kevin about his experience with Smith & Wesson! I talked to the S&W customer service department and just got the opposite direction about dry firing their revolvers. Per their reply, "You can dry fire any of our revolvers with no harm." Somebody at S&W must not know what they are talking about, but which one! I enjoy your testing articles. — **Bill**

### **Re "Handgun Bullets: How Do They Penetrate in Home Materials?" November 2015**

Given that legally we don't want to kill anyone, just stop the threat, this is an excellent article for those who want to know what their home-defense weapon/ammo of choice will do when they miss while shooting at an intruder. Priceless. Thank you. To those who want to split hairs, go do your own testing. Anyone expecting/demanding absolutely, positively precise, 100% flawless data, it won't happen. This article is meant to give you a general idea



of the consequences. Your findings on shotshells are most interesting. I've always felt #4 buckshot was a good compromise. Maybe it's time to consider #6 birdshot for distances under 21 feet.

— **mejones53 @ Gun-Tests.com**

### **Re "40 S&W Compacts: Taurus, Kahr, S&W, Springfield, & SIG," September 2019**

First, your comments on the Taurus G2c were spot on. I bought one as a backup to my Tangfolio BTA-90. Now there's a really fine 9mm. I've had one for more than 20 years. Your favorable review and the adjustable sights convinced me to give it a try. I'm a bullseye target shooter, so pistols without adjustable sights drive me nuts. Since, I have sold several to highly satisfied customers. Kudos to you and your staff on that call.

Second, I was astounded that you gave the S&W Bodyguard M&P 380 such high marks. I've made good money swapping the sights out on that pistol for customers who think they are hard to see, and the laser too dim in bright sunlight to be any use. Second, the trigger is gritty because of very poor craftsmanship. I had a customer bring me one saying the trigger was bad. Here's what I found. The

trigger bar is a stamped piece of metal. The durable information regarding the pistol is stamped on the side of steel insert in the polymer frame. The raw edges of the transfer bar rub across the raised lettering on the frame insert. This is the source of the trigger's gritty feeling. Not wanting to touch the stamped information and serial number, I polished the transfer bar, resulting in a much better, if still ridiculously long, trigger pull. I would suggest the lack of attention to detail on the transfer bar would disqualify the M&P380 from being a top pick. — **Ken**

### **Re "22-250 Bolt-Action Rifles from Browning, Howa, and Bergara," December 2019**

I enjoyed your article on use of 22-250 rifles for smaller big game. Using appropriate projectiles like Barnes 62-grain TSX in .224 caliber, a 223 Remington can also yield wonderful closer range performance. In the right rifle, it's highly accurate. Recoil is so minimal that you can keep the game in view when the projectile strikes. If the game is close enough, a head shot is deadly. It's not a 30-06, and neither is its recoil! It is another option to be considered under the appropriate circumstances.

— **Alan W.**



### **Re "Big-Bore Hunting Revolvers From Smith & Wesson, Taurus" December 2019**

Hello, staff. Prior to the 2019 hunting season, I had decided that this would be the year for me to take the plunge into the world of handgun hunting. My choice in the right handgun hunting platform had a few requirements that were simple and straightforward:

- I wanted something that



**The S&W 460XVR using 460 S&W Magnum loads shows some extreme blast and muzzle flip. The multi-ported muzzle brake worked well and was loud, offering a lot of concussion.**

muzzle, to the gain-twist rifling, it is a strongly engineered handgun that offers very manageable shootability. They are accurate. They are powerful. But most important, they are versatile.

Not only does the 460 S&W model fire the 45 Schofield, 45 Long Colt, 454 Casull, and the grand-daddy of the line-up in the powerful 460 S&W Magnum round, it adds a lot more versatility to reloaders. For example, with the different types of propellant that supports the 460 S&W, a reloader can use the 460 S&W Magnum case with lower charges to achieve softer-recoil shooting rounds. As always, do your research before venturing off into reduced loads if you are reloading 460 S&W for the first time. There are a lot of good articles out there, and several of the more common reloading manuals (or online resources like Hornady) provide excellent load data. In short, reloading the 460 S&W is yet another great part of the versatility of this round.

I'm looking forward to harvesting my first animal with the 460 S&W Magnum. Keep up the great work in future issues to come. — **Ryan**

offered versatility (i.e., being able to fire more than one cartridge);

- I wanted a round that could tackle medium-sized game (whitetail deer) up through the larger species of big game, moose and elk, and potentially one day safari-type dangerous game;
- and I wanted a frame that was accurate, yet comfortable to shoot.

After hours of research and scrubbing through online videos of hunters using various types and calibers of handguns in differing

hunting scenarios, I opted for the S&W X-Frame revolver chambered in 460 S&W Magnum sporting the 8.38-inch barrel. The December 2019 review of the 460 S&W Magnum versus the 44 Magnum and the 500 S&W Magnum was added assurance. That was a well-written review, and it falls in line with some of the things I've also noted since acquiring the 460 S&W Magnum.

Recoil is surprisingly manageable. I was initially a little concerned about recoil, but S&W did a very good job engineering this massive X-Frame. From the weight distribution, to the ported

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**GT**



# Four New 9mm Pistols from Stoeger, Arex, Ruger, and SIG

*Finally, we get a SIG Sauer P365 to the range, and it's okay. Just okay? Yeah. The others were the Stoeger STR-9, Arex Rex Delta, and Ruger Security-9, one of which we consider to be a better buy.*

**S**omewhere, marketing and engineering professionals are making a checklist of the features that a personal-defense handgun should have and must have to be competitive. The result is some of the most practical, useful, and reliable handguns we have seen. Some miss the boat in one regard or the other. Others are almost ideal for personal defense. The modern polymer-frame striker-fired pistol is the most popular defensive handgun by a considerable margin, with the reliability and combat efficiency of the Glock being the yardstick by

which other personal-defense handguns are judged. It's okay to want something different, but if you are betting your life on the piece, it should be a useful handgun. To sell in this market, a comparable pistol should cost less than the Glock. If there are shortcuts taken, we need to know about them. If the pistol costs more than the Glock, then we need to see features superior to the Glock's.

In this report we test four pistols. Three are new introductions, and the fourth is one that we somehow have not yet tested until now. The Arex Rex Delta



Clockwise from top left, we tested the SIG Sauer P365, Arex Rex Delta, Stoeger STR-9, and Ruger's Security-9 Compact. These were four reliable handguns worth their price. The SIG and the Ruger are both compacts and are slightly smaller than the Rex and STR-9. Of the two smaller guns, though the SIG P365 offers good performance, we feel that the considerable difference in price favors the Security-9. We really like the Arex Delta's performance and its compact size and would pick it over the Stoeger in that size class. And, after we shot them side by side, we'd prefer the Arex overall for our carry duties.

## 9MM LUGER RANGE DATA

<b>Black Hills Ammunition 115-grain FMJ</b>	<b>Stoeger STR-9</b>	<b>Arex Rex Delta</b>	<b>Ruger Security-9</b>	<b>SIG Sauer P365</b>
Average Velocity	1166 fps	1155 fps	1102 fps	1134 fps
Muzzle Energy	347 ft.-lbs.	341 ft.-lbs.	310 ft.-lbs.	328 ft.-lbs.
Small Group	2.5 in.	2.0 in.	3.5 in.	2.9 in.
Average Group	3.1 in.	2.6 in.	4.1 in.	3.6 in.
<b>Winchester PDX1 Defender 124-grain +P JHP</b>	<b>Stoeger STR-9</b>	<b>Arex Rex Delta</b>	<b>Ruger Security-9</b>	<b>SIG Sauer P365</b>
Average Velocity	1212 fps	1198 fps	1180 fps	1165 fps
Muzzle Energy	404 ft.-lbs.	395 ft.-lbs.	383 ft.-lbs.	374 ft.-lbs.
Small Group	2.25 in.	1.9 in.	3.0 in.	2.4 in.
Average Group	3.0 in.	2.5 in.	3.6 in.	3.0 in.
<b>Winchester PDX 147-grain JHP</b>	<b>Stoeger STR-9</b>	<b>Arex Rex Delta</b>	<b>Ruger Security-9</b>	<b>SIG Sauer P365</b>
Average Velocity	980 fps	972 fps	940 fps	956 fps
Muzzle Energy	313 ft.-lbs.	308 ft.-lbs.	288 ft.-lbs.	298 ft.-lbs.
Small Group	2.5 in.	2.45 in.	3.6 in.	3.0 in.
Average Group	3.2 in.	2.7 in.	2.9 in.	3.8 in.

We used a Bullshooters pistol rest on a bench to fire five-shot groups at 25 yards. We used a Competition Electronics Pro Chrony to measure velocities. The chronograph was 10 feet from the muzzle of the firearm. Ammo sources: Black Hills Ammunition 115-grain FMJ (\$12.55/20 from LuckyGunner.com); Winchester 124-grain PDX1 +P (\$18.30/20 from OutdoorLimited.com), and Winchester 147-grain PDX JHP (\$22/20 from MidwayUSA.com).

9mm Luger, \$425, and Stoeger STR-9, \$350, are similar in operation and size to the Glock 17 and Glock 19 9mm handguns. The SIG P365 Nitron Micro-Compact 365-9-BXR3 9mm Luger, \$465, is a polymer-framed 9mm similar in size to the Glock 43, but with higher magazine capacity as a result of its slightly staggered magazine. The Ruger Security-9 Model 3818, \$309, is the only hammer-fired gun tested and the only pistol with a manual safety, and in the latter regard, it is a rarity in the market. We wanted to see how the polymer-frame compacts shot and handled head to head (SIG vs. Ruger), as well as the service-size 9mms (Stoeger and Arex). A more complicated comparison was between sizes. A lot of consumers have trouble deciding on how big a gun they want or need, so we tried to see how the different sizes performed. The Stoeger STR-9 (overall length 7.2 inches, height 5.4 inches, barrel length 4.17 inches) and the Arex Delta (OAL 6.9 inches, height 4.8 inches, 4-inch barrel) are service-size handguns, and the Ruger Security Nine (OAL 6.52 inches, height 4.35 inches, barrel length 3.42 inches) and SIG P365 (OAL 5.8 inches, height 4.4 inches, barrel length 3.1 inches) are concealed-carry handguns with 10-round magazines.

In this test, there were some remarkable things going on. Despite firing 1,600 cartridges during the evaluation, there were no failures to feed, chamber, fire, or eject related to the handguns. There were

ammunition-related short cycles and shooter errors. There were handling differences we did not like, and a couple of failures of a pistol to lock open on the last shot. Only one pistol invited shooter errors, which speaks highly of the design and ergonomics of the handguns. All these dogs will run.

## Ammunition Details

During the test period, we fired ammunition in combat shooting and standard accuracy testing. We fired three five-shot groups with each load to test accuracy. The initial work included the Jesse James brand 124-grain jacketed hollowpoints (\$19/20 rounds from AmmoInc.com), Black Hills Ammunition 115-grain full-metal-jacket bullets (\$12.55/20 from LuckyGunner.com), Winchester 115-grain FMJs (\$20/100 rounds from Academy.com), Black Hills Ammunition 115-grain EXP jacketed hollowpoints (\$15/20 from LuckyGunner.com), Winchester 124-grain PDX +P (\$18.30/20 from OutdoorLimited.com), and the Winchester 147-grain PDX (\$22/20 from MidwayUSA.com). We felt that this breadth of coverage would ensure the pistols were reliable with 115-, 124-, and 147-grain loads as well as +P loads. We only used five of the six loads in all testing, however, for reasons that follow. The FMJ loads fired during the range testing, 200 rounds in each pistol, were 100 of the Black Hills FMJs and 100 of the Winchester ball ammo. We also

## HANDGUN COMPARISON



We used a good mix of both full-metal-jacketed and jacketed hollowpoint ammunition during the test.



Left, it is reasonable to compare the Rex Delta, bottom, to the Glock 19, top, in efficiency and performance. The Arex internals, below, are familiar as well.



fired 10 rounds of each of the JHP loads, the Black Hills 115-grain EXP, the Winchester PDX 124-grain +P, and the Winchester 147-grain PDX, in offhand fire in each handgun. We then used the Black Hills Ammunition 115-grain FMJ, the Winchester 124-grain PDX +P, and the Winchester 147-grain PDX for accuracy testing. The leftover JHP loads went back to the combat firing line and were finished off to confirm our final rating. Here's how the guns performed individually:

### **Arex Rex Delta REXDELTA01** **9mm Luger, \$425**

This was a recent price at ClassicFirearms.com. When you look at the extra \$85 for the Arex Delta over the Stoeger, you have to look at the advantage, if any, the extra dollars contribute to the pistol. Before we begin the technical description, we note one advantage between the Arex and Stoeger is in size. The Arex Delta is smaller, lighter, and thinner than the Stoeger 9mm. The Arex is slightly longer than a Glock 19, while the Stoeger pistol is slightly shorter than a Glock 17. The Arex Delta also recoils harder than the heavier Stoeger as a result of the former's lighter weight, but then that is physics. If the Stoeger featured 17-round magazines like the Arex the line would be more blurred, but it doesn't. We could load more than 14 rounds in the Stoeger only with great effort. With the extended-bumper-pad magazine in place, the Arex Delta is the same height as the Stoeger. But the Arex Delta holds 17 rounds in the larger magazine. And the Arex magazines are not difficult to manage at all. They are easily loaded, and they drop free when the magazine release is pressed. We confirmed this before even beginning firing. The 15-round magazine holds more than the actual number of cartridges we were able to stuff into the Stoeger magazines.

The Arex features dual slide-lock levers, which we consider a plus. There are a total of three grip inserts. The raters were in general agreement on these panels; the panels were beneficial, but one rater felt one was too raspy. That is easily changed.

Another rater was equally certain the fit and texture was a reason he fired the Arex Delta well. There are dips in the grip frame above the main grip that offer a viable finger rest.

Disassembly is a bit easier than the Stoeger or the Glock as the frame pulls up and out and reassembles the same way. Ergonomics cannot be faulted. Cocking force to rack the slide, however, was the heaviest of the tested pistols.

The Arex action is similar to, but not identical to, a Glock pistol. The Arex trigger action features a definite two-stage feel that makes certain the shooter is in charge of the handgun during firing. The break is considerably lighter than the Stoeger, about 6.0 pounds even, and crisp. During the combat stage, the Arex exhibited excellent results. While the Arex Delta is a Glock 19-size pistol, it performed better than the Glock 17-size Stoeger STR-9. Because the magazine release is ambidextrous, the pistol exhibited excellent speed in reloading, left or right hand. The rear sight allows racking on the belt, although we did not practice this very much. Combat groups were good to excellent. While the pistol developed more recoil than the Stoeger STR-9, the pistol is comfortable to fire. In absolute accuracy, the pistol gave good results. Average groups were consistent at 1.9 to 3.0 inches.

The Arex pistol is clearly in the league with the Glock Generation 5, as far as accuracy potential is concerned. We took a hard look at the Rex Delta and saw that the Rex costs a bit more than the STR-9, but we feel the Delta's superior trigger and accuracy make it the better choice.

### **Stoeger Industries STR-9 31721** **9mm Luger, \$350**

This was a recent price at ImpactGuns.com. We found this handgun for retail in a local shop for \$340. Interestingly, Stoeger is marketing the pistol in three versions. The first (31720), found for \$277 in stock at ImpactGuns.com, comes with only a medium grip insert and a single magazine. We firmly believe you



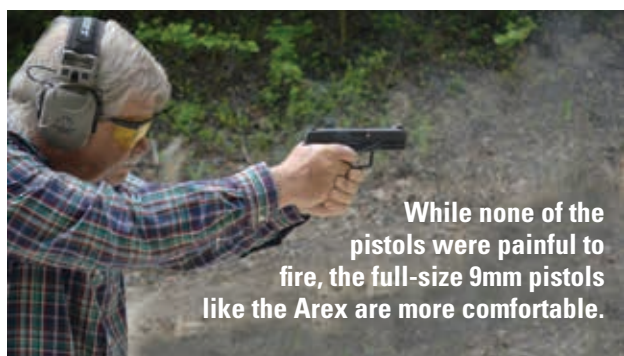
## AREX REX DELTA REXDELTA-01 9MM LUGER, \$425 GUN TESTS GRADE: A (BEST BUY)

The Arex Delta offers plenty of value for the money. Reliability is good, practical accuracy is good, and the pistol is the right size for concealed carry. We like the ambidextrous controls and the takedown — press the levers down and the slide pulls straight up and off the frame. Overall, this is a credible pistol that may offer real competition to Glock.



Weight Loaded .....	27.1 oz.
Slide Material .....	Forged steel
Slide Retraction Effort .....	19.0 lbs.
Receiver Material .....	Black polymer
Front Strap Height .....	2.3 in.
Back Strap Height .....	3.2 in.
Barrel .....	4.0 in. long, 1:9.8 twist rate, 6 grooves, RH Twist
Grip Thickness Max. ....	1.15 in.
Grip Circumference .....	5.6 in.
Magazines .....	(1) 15 and (1) 17 round
Rear Sight .....	Drift adjustable
Front Sight .....	Dovetail post
Sight Radius .....	5.5 in.
Trigger Pull Weight .....	6.0 lbs.
Trigger Span .....	2.5 in.
Trigger Travel, Reset Travel .....	0.27 in./0.07 in.
Safety .....	No manual safety
Warranty .....	Limited lifetime
Made In .....	Slovenia
Telephone .....	(702) 215-3600
Website .....	FIMEGroup.com

Action Type .....	Semi-auto short recoil-operated locked breech, double action only (SDA)
Overall Length .....	6.9 in.
Overall Height .....	4.8 in.
Max. Width .....	1.25 in.
Weight Unloaded .....	22.4 oz.



Fired below eye level, the Rex Delta pointed well and was comfortable to fire and accurate in combat firing.



The Rex Delta, left, is more compact than the Stoeger STR-9, right, but the Arex holds more ammunition in its magazines, either 15 or 17 rounds compared to 14.



We like the Arex Delta's forward cocking serrations and slightly beveled slide.

## HANDGUN COMPARISON

need at least three magazines with a service pistol — the magazine in the gun, the one on the belt, and one resting. The pistol tested (31721) comes with three grip inserts and three magazines. We feel the extra \$72.50 is a worthwhile investment. Another version with night sights (31722) retails for \$400 at ImpactGuns.com.

As for similarities to the Glock — one rater stated it is a Glock! — mechanically, the internal parts are identical in appearance to the Glock 17 pistol, for the most part. They do not interchange, as far as we can tell. We tried to swap some of the parts and it was a no go. Some of the pins may interchange, but that is the extent of it. The striker of the Glock is a rectangle, while the Stoeger uses a rounded firing pin. The spent brass looks just like any other handgun's spent brass. The Glock extractor is driven by a rod plunger and spring. The STR-9 uses a longer pivoting extractor powered by a coil spring.

The STR-9 pistol is a polymer-framed design with a striker-fired action. The action is partially prepped by the slide, either by racking the slide or by the slide moving in recoil after firing. The striker is prepped against spring pressure and a press of the trigger continues to move the striker to the rear and fire the pistol. Simple enough. The Stoeger works in exactly the same manner as the Glock 17 and every other Glock handgun, and similar designs such as the Smith & Wesson Military & Police pistols. There is a lever set in the trigger that must be pressed to



**Here's the Stoeger compared to the Glock M45 9mm, bottom. The Stoeger and the Glock are very similar. In fire control, the Stoeger operates exactly in the manner of the Glock.**

release the trigger. This lever also prevents lateral discharge. The action is consistent from shot to shot. The trigger action has a stiff take-up and breaks at 7.5 pounds on the Lyman digital trigger pull gauge. This trigger press is heavier than the standard Glock 5.5- to 6.0-pound press. This trigger, we felt, is a limiting factor in getting the most performance out of the STR-9. Fitting the hand to the tool felt good, and the three backstraps allow that to be fine-tuned. Finger placement and fit and feel are good. The frame features nine flats in the front strap, three on each side and three across the actual front strap, and a slight finger swell that all the raters liked.

The rear strap is nicely checkered. Some felt the rear checkering was too sharp. (Why don't makers offer one smooth grip insert for the few that prefer this? Another 50 cents?) Slight finger indentions are located on each side of the frame, and there is a protected magazine release. The magazine release is advertised as reversible, but we did not attempt to change it. There is a light rail molded into the frame. The serial number is in the dust cover forward of the trigger guard. The trigger guard differs little from the Glock, with a squared section in the front and an undercut in the rear. Someone paid close attention to ergonomics and got it right with this handgun. The grip has something of the early model Glock and the Heckler & Koch VP9 as well.

The steel slide isn't as square as the Glock and is nicely beveled at the top. There are aggressive cocking serrations both forward and rear. The cocking serrations were rated excellent by all raters. They are a good feature on a \$340 pistol. The sights are traditional black steel sights with white three-dot inserts. They seem more similar to the SIG P320 than other types, but the height would be wrong with SIG P320 sights. The rear sight is flat on the front, allowing racking the slide with the rear sight if needed. The sights proved well regulated for factory loads. The 6 o'clock hold was used for 115-grain ammunition, 124-grain ammunition was close, and we used a dead-on hold at 25 yards for 147-grain ammunition.

When preparing for the initial range work, the Stoeger pistol's 15-round magazines were very difficult to load, even using the supplied magazine loader. We were able to load 10 to 11 by hand but had to use the loader (it is identical to the Glock's) to get past this, and even so for most of the raters, the final round was a struggle. We ended up loading 14 rounds for most of the testing. We intended to use the Jesse James



**The Arex Delta, left, is a bit thinner than the Stoeger, middle, and Glock 45 9mm, right. While similar to the Glock internally, the Arex Delta isn't as similar to the Glock as the Stoeger pistol is.**



## STOEGER INDUSTRIES STR-9 31721 9MM LUGER, \$350

### GUN TESTS GRADE: B

If you like the Glock 17, you will like the STR-9. Stoeger is banking on the pistol's affordability and similarity to a service pistol icon. The Stoeger was reliable with full-power ammunition. You save an average of \$199 under the price of the Glock 17, per our research. The trade-off is, you also get a heavier trigger, magazines that are more difficult to load, and if the loose rear sight is taken for what it is worth, perhaps less attention to detail. On the other hand, the pistol is reliable, and, despite the heavy trigger action, accurate enough for personal defense. The pistol fits Glock holsters. It is certainly worth the money, but it is not our favorite among the handguns tested.



<b>Action Type</b> .....	Semi-auto striker fired, short recoil-operated locked breech, double action only
<b>Overall Length</b> .....	7.2 in.
<b>Overall Height</b> .....	5.4 in.
<b>Max. Width</b> .....	1.25 in.
<b>Weight Unloaded</b> .....	24.0 oz.
<b>Weight Loaded</b> .....	27.6 oz.



The Stoeger breaks no new ground for technology, but offers proven concepts. This is a reliable and functional handgun. Three backstraps and three magazines are more than standard equipment in the STR-9's price range.



<b>Slide</b> .....	Forged steel, black nitride finish, front and rear serrations
<b>Slide Retraction Effort</b> .....	22.0 lbs.
<b>Receiver</b> .....	Black textured polymer, accessory rail, reversible magazine release
<b>Finish</b> .....	Stainless steel
<b>Front Strap Height</b> .....	3.0 in.
<b>Back Strap Height</b> .....	3.5 in.
<b>Barrel</b> .....	4.17 in., loaded chamber indicator
<b>Grip Thickness Max.</b> .....	1.25 in.
<b>Grip Circumference</b> .....	5.9 in., 3 backstraps
<b>Magazines</b> .....	(3) 15 round
<b>Rear Sight</b> .....	Drift adjustable, two dots
<b>Front Sight</b> .....	Dovetail post, one dot
<b>Sight Radius</b> .....	5.9 in.
<b>Trigger Pull Weight</b> .....	7.5 lbs.
<b>Trigger Span</b> .....	2.75 in.
<b>Safety</b> .....	Trigger lever
<b>Warranty</b> .....	5 years
<b>Made In</b> .....	Turkey
<b>Telephone</b> .....	(301) 283-6300
<b>Website</b> .....	StoegerIndustries.com



Above: The Stoeger STR-9 short cycled with the Jesse James loading. Right, note the rear sight after it self-drifted.



Left: The Stoeger STR-9, top, is similar in most regards to the Glock 17, bottom. The magazines do not interchange, as the Glock magazine is slightly larger in diameter and will not fit the Stoeger STR-9mm magazine well. As for holstering the Stoeger STR-9 the pistol fits both leather and Kydex holsters on hand for the Glock 17. This may not be true of all holsters and types, but as for our holsters on hand the Stoeger is a good fit.



## HANDGUN COMPARISON

124-grain JHP for accuracy testing, and of course we like to test new loads. The load short-cycled in the Stoeger STR-9. The rate of short cycle was about 40%. This was most true toward the end of the magazine when magazine spring pressure is less. This wasn't a good start for the STR-9.

But then we chronographed the load. Average velocity was 998 fps, 50 to 100 fps below standard for the 124-grain 9mm. This load functioned in a Glock 19 on hand for reference, but only to the 13th round, the last rounds short cycled. The Ruger Security-9 functioned the load, but the slide did not lock open on the last shot. We did not try this load in the SIG or the Rex Delta. We went to the Black Hills Ammunition 115-grain FMJ and the STR-9 functioned. The magazines became a bit easier to load toward the end of the test, but the magazine loader is definitely needed to top off the final six to seven cartridges. Even at the end of the test, the magazines were what you would term stiff. Many female shooters and older shooters will find this a disadvantage. One of our aged 60+ raters was quite defeated by these magazines after 10 rounds. We have not tested anything stiffer that we can recall.

In combat firing the pistol is controllable. While heavier than we like, the trigger is smooth and consistent. The sights are good. We achieved good results in combat drills. The magazines are not drop free, in common with early-model Glock 17 9mm magazines. This is as big an issue as the user makes of it. The magazines were very uniform in the drop, and the magazine extending from the magazine well was easy enough to grasp and remove. Speed loads were not as fast as with the Rex Delta, and true speed loads were not possible. Feed reliability with the FMJ and JHP loads was excellent. Cycle reliability was not an issue once we stopped using underpowered ammunition.

The trigger, while heavy, has a rapid reset. The pistol's grip is comfortable and recoil isn't a factor. There were no failures to feed, chamber, fire, or eject. We rated the pistol high in combat ability. The trigger is a drawback, but only because of its weight, not its action or smoothness.

Firing for accuracy from a solid benchrest, the Stoeger gave good, but not outstanding, results. The average accuracy is on par with other polymer-frame striker-fired handguns of the same size and weight class. We felt that the Glock Generation 5, with its tighter trigger and Marksman barrel, is generally more accurate, but then it is more expensive as well. The pistol produced five-shot groups of 2.5 to 3.5 inches, very consistent and well centered. The Stoeger STR-9 is more than accurate enough for personal defense. It isn't as accurate as the Alpha Rex 9mm, but it is close, and the Stoeger is more accurate than the two compact pistols from Ruger and SIG.

The Stoeger's performance was rated excellent

for the price, but there were demerits. After the test, we compared notes. The Stoeger STR-9 9mm pistol is a credible 9mm service-size pistol. We like the three magazines and three inserts in the version tested. We rated the pistol down a half grade based on the heavy trigger. We rated it down another half grade based on the non-drop-free magazines. Another problem that arose was that the rear sight became loose during the combat firing strings. It drifted far to one side in the dovetail. We had to re-zero the pistol. We did not rate the pistol down on this, as after we tightened the Allen screw down it did not come loose again. While not perfect the pistol is reliable with full-power ammunition, accurate enough for defense, features good grip design, and is supplied with three magazines as tested. We would buy this pistol and use it with confidence.

### Ruger Security-9 Compact Model 3818 9mm Luger, \$309

The price is a local average from stores near our test facility in South Carolina. The original Ruger Security-9 pistol was introduced as an inexpensive handgun for homeowners and concealed-carry-permit holders. We anticipated a compact version, and the new Security-9 has came off well.

This 9mm handgun isn't the typical polymer-frame striker-fired handgun. The Security-9 is a hammer-fired handgun. The system is similar to the Ruger LCP II. The action is fairly short, and while Ruger refers to its operation as a "Secure Action," like many other modern handgun actions it defies a pat description. We think that it is a single action in the way it behaves, but we also agree with Ruger that is it different. The trigger is fairly short. The action isn't difficult to control. The trigger broke consistently at a smooth 6.2 pounds. The pistol features a lever set in the trigger that prevents lateral discharge; the lever must be pressed into the trigger face to press the trigger to



Here's the price tag from a local shop on the Ruger. This isn't a lot of money for a reliable 9mm.

**RUGER SECURITY-9 COMPACT MODEL 3818 9MM LUGER, \$309**  
**GUN TESTS GRADE: B**

The Ruger Security-9 gave excellent performance as far as reliability, even functioning with the low-power loads, although it did not lock open on the last shot with these loads. The pistol is adequate for the task and will not break the bank. There are guns we like more, but not in this price range. It is the better buy among the two compacts, we believe. For home defense on a budget, we might even bypass the two larger handguns in favor of this one.



**Action Type**.....Short recoil-operated locked breech,  
 modified single action  
**Overall Length**.....6.52 in.  
**Overall Height**.....4.35 in.  
**Maximum Width**.....1.2 in.  
**Weight Unloaded**.....22 oz.  
**Weight Loaded**.....25.6 oz.  
**Slide**.....Forged, hardened alloy steel, blued;  
 front grip serrations

**Slide Retraction Effort**.....19.0 lbs.  
**Receiver Material**.....Glass-reinforced nylon  
 over aluminum chassis  
**Finish**.....Black  
**Front Strap Height**.....1.8 in.  
**Back Strap Height**.....2.8 in.  
**Barrel**.....3.42 in. long; blued alloy steel;  
 6 grooves, 1:10 RH twist  
**Grip Thickness Maximum**.....1.2 in.  
**Grip Circumference**.....5.65 in.  
**Magazines**.....(2) 10-round alloy steel detachable boxes  
**Rear Sight**.....Drift adjustable  
**Front Sight**.....Dovetail post, fixed  
**Sight Radius**.....4.9 in.  
**Trigger Pull Weight**.....6.5 lbs. (Secure Action)  
**Trigger Span**.....2.62 in.  
**Safeties**.....Trigger, external manual  
**Made In**.....USA  
**Warranty**.....No written warranty  
**Telephone**.....(336) 949-5200  
**Website**.....Ruger.com  
**Available in CA**.....No  
**Available in MA**.....No



Right arrow: The Ruger Security-9's slide lock button is okay as far as size goes, but it was very stiff in operation. Left arrow: The takedown pin isn't captive and must be removed to field-strip the Ruger Security-9. Right: While we preferred other takedown sequences, breaking down the Ruger Security-9 was fine. This is a pretty simple pistol in terms of operation.



The Ruger Security-9 fit this Galco Skyops holster well. The holster is designed for the Glock 19.



Note the beveled portion of the slide for easy holstering in tight leather and Kydex. The Ruger also offers well-designed forward cocking serrations.



## HANDGUN COMPARISON

the rear. The pistol also features a manual positive safety. The safety is well located on the frame and falls under the thumb easily. It isn't difficult to key off quickly, but it requires more effort to place in the Fire position. This safety isn't going to be pressed on from recoil as you fire. This is better than a safety that moves easily to Safe, and may be the design intent. The pistol is close to the size of a Glock 19 and is supplied with two 10-round magazines. The magazines are robust, well made, and proved easy enough to load to full capacity. The pistol is supplied with a magazine floorplate extension and works fine with 15-round full-size-Security-9 magazines.

The barrel is 3.4 inches long. This barrel length develops less velocity than the 4-inch barrel of the full size pistol, but more than a 3-inch-barrel 9mm. Velocity is reasonably close to the 4-inch barrel.

The pistol is just over an inch wide and weighs just under 24 ounces unloaded. This weight is ideal for concealed carry and makes for good recoil control. The slide is blued steel, and the frame is glass-reinforced nylon. The frame is nicely textured for control. The slide-cocking serrations are well designed and are not difficult to work with.

The pistol has a good appearance, even rakish and ultra modern. The sights are well designed for rapid acquisition and worked well in firing for accuracy as well. The rear is a bar and the front is a white dot. The rear sight is adjustable for windage. Pebbling on the front strap, rear strap, and sides of the grip are excellent. The pistol features a short light rail. The balance, feel, and fit in the hand are good.

At the firing range, we found the magazines were not difficult to load to full 10-round capacity. The magazine seated positively. When firing the pistol, the shooter establishes a certain rhythm, largely dependent on trigger and recoil control. Press the trigger, allow the trigger to reset in recoil, and fire again as soon as the sights are acquired. The pistol is more than accurate enough for personal defense. It is a soft shooter and controllable.

As for bench accuracy, the pistol is capable of making head shots at 15 yards. The pistol isn't as accurate as the larger guns, but it is accurate enough for concealed carry.

A demerit appeared as we tried to make rapid speed loads. The slide lock is very difficult to release. Some of the raters could not release it with one hand. While the slide release loosened a bit with use, this isn't ideal for personal-defense use.

Most of the raters did not like the Security-9's takedown sequence. Tipping the takedown lever out requires some type of tool. We prefer a pistol that features captive parts, not one that requires a rod be taken out and laid aside. We rated the pistol down a half grade based on the stiff slide lock and another half grade on the takedown. For the money, we would buy it ahead of the SIG P365.



**The SIG is supplied with a gun lock, two magazines, and an owners manual. Note the magazine cut out that allows easier control of the magazine.**

### **SIG P365 Nitron Micro-Compact 365-9-BXR3 9mm Luger, \$465**

The P365 is the priciest pistol tested. Yet we routinely see these pistols at shops marked up over \$500, and used pistols with an asking price well over \$400. The pistol is popular and seems to hold its value. Our job is to determine what that value may be in a practical sense. The pistol features the standard for modern times, a prepped or partly cocked striker, when the pistol is at ready. The striker is loaded or prepped by racking the slide. The trigger is pressed to move the striker to the rear, breaking the striker against spring pressure. The striker runs forward and the pistol fires. We found the trigger action smooth enough. There is no spongy reset; this pistol features a sharp reset. The trigger action broke cleanly at 6.3 pounds originally, settling into 6.0 pounds by the end of the test period.

The slide is Nitron coated and should be resistant to corrosion. The slide features a good set of combat sights that we found worked well in both rapid fire and in firing for maximum accuracy. The pistol also features forward cocking serrations. The frame is comfortable for most hand sizes and properly pebbled. The grip frame is designed, according to SIG, around the 10-round magazine. The magazine is surprisingly slim for a 10-round magazine, but if you look at the whole picture, it is understandable. Most of the slimline 9mm magazines are not exactly vertically aligned, but rather staggered, which allows the designers to fit 7 rounds into a 6-round platform. SIG was able to fit the 10-round magazine into the P365 with a modest 0.45-inch magazine extension. The resulting design is 0.1 inch thinner than most any double-column magazine.

The result is a remarkably slim grip frame for the capacity. We understand why engineers were tasked to design the magazine first. The category of handguns that is most popular in America for concealed carry is the slimline 9mm. The single stacks will be threatened by the 10-round-magazine SIG P365, we believe.



## SIG P365 NITRON MICRO-COMPACT 365-9-BXR3 9MM LUGER, \$465

### GUN TESTS GRADE: B

The SIG P365 is a reliable handgun and was more accurate than the Ruger Security-9 in slow fire accuracy. The SIG also recoils considerably more, according to our raters. The SIG demands attention to detail in handling or you will experience shooter-induced malfunctions. The SIG costs more than the Ruger Security-9 without overwhelming advantages.



Weight Unloaded .....	17.8 oz.
Weight Loaded .....	20.9 oz.
Slide .....	Stainless steel, black Nitron finish
Slide Retraction Effort .....	17.5 lbs.
Receiver Material .....	Black polymer
Front Strap Height .....	1.8 in.
Back Strap Height .....	2.5 in.
Barrel .....	3.1 in. long, carbon steel
Grip Thickness Maximum .....	0.9 in.
Grip Circumference .....	4.9 in.
Magazines .....	(2) 10-round stainless
Rear Sight .....	Drift adjustable, X-RAY3 Day/Night
Front Sight .....	Dovetail post
Sight Radius .....	5.0 in.
Trigger Pull Weight .....	6.0 lbs.
Trigger Span .....	2.5 in.
Safety .....	No manual safety
Made In .....	USA
Warranty .....	Limited lifetime
Telephone .....	(603) 610-3000
Website .....	SIGSauer.com

**Action Type**.....Semi-auto striker fired, short recoil-operated locked breech, double action only

**Overall Length**.....5.8 in.

**Overall Height**.....4.4 in.

**Maximum Width**.....1.0 in.



Fired with one hand, the SIG 9mm did well but demanded attention to detail and a firm grip. We included weak-hand drills in combat firing.



Retention firing and firing below eye level is a sure test of a pistol's reliability. With +P loads, the SIG exhibited increased muzzle flip.



The SIG 9mm, designed around a compact 10-round magazine, is a small handgun. The SIG P365 offers more than twice the capacity of some 38 Special snubnose revolvers. Below: The SIG's 10-round magazine was the element around which the downsized pistol was designed.



## HANDGUN COMPARISON

**Right: The SIG P365 is easily field stripped. Easy disassembly is a prime qualification our testers consider.**



**Right: Fired offhand, the SIG P365 was controllable and accurate enough for personal defense. The grip feels thin. The short front and back straps will be too small for some hands to hold the pistol with all the fingers. That's just a trade-off you'll have to accept to get a "micro-compact" footprint.**



The pistol features but three controls, the takedown lever, slide lock, and magazine release. The pistol is as small as possible. This is good for concealed carry but not ideal for handling. The pistol demands a different set of skills than handling a full-size pistol. Considerable adjustment, as an example, is demanded when moving from the Rex Delta to the SIG P365. The thumbs-forward grip many of us use isn't possible with the slim P365. The controls are tight, and one of the raters let his thumb drift into the slide during his firing strings. This was not counted against the pistol, this is shooter error. Another rater allowed his thumb to press against the slide of the SIG P365 during firing and slowed the slide down enough to cause a short cycle. No fault of the gun, but a serious consideration for anyone adopting the P365 for personal defense. That said, the pistol gave good results on the firing range. During combat firing, the pistol was the equal of the Ruger, perhaps slightly superior overall. We felt the trigger action of the SIG was superior to the Ruger 9mm handgun. Recoil, however, was considerably stiffer than the Ruger's, we thought.

When we fired the P365 from a solid benchrest, the SIG turned in smaller groups than the Ruger, but not by a huge margin. The SIG features good sights and also features a good trigger action. A drawback is that while the P365 features a light rail, it will only accept certain SIG lights.

When firing the pistol, we used it in several drills,

including retention drills and weak-hand drills. This is a test of function that will expose a propensity toward short cycles. The pistol functioned fine and never stuttered during this test. Recoil with the +P load, however, as one rater stated, was startling. When firing the Winchester PDX +P load in the Stoeger and Arex pistols, there was little discernible difference in recoil. The 9mm simply isn't a hard kicker. In the Ruger, we noticed the difference, and in the SIG, recoil was stout.

This is another consideration when choosing a personal-defense handgun, and the tolerance for recoil will differ from person to person.

The SIG P365 gave a credible showing in the personal defense drills, clearly equal to the Ruger. In firing for maximum accuracy, neither the Ruger Security-9 Compact or the SIG P365 was a tackdriver, but each was accurate enough for personal defense. The SIG had the edge in absolute accuracy. We feel that this edge was primarily a result of the SIG's superior trigger action. We rated the pistol down a half grade on cramped hand fit for some raters, which is part of the game for such a compact pistol, and another on the expense. Just the same, this is a credible handgun that should serve many shooters well.

### Our Team Said

● We would buy the Ruger Security-9 Compact and use it with confidence. We would also purchase the SIG P365 Micro-Compact. The Ruger is the better buy, in our opinion, but we recognize the SIG offers good performance, and we especially liked the SIG trigger.

● In the case of the service-size pistols, the race was not as close. The Stoeger STR-9 is comparable to a Glock 17 in many ways and performed with reliability using full-power loads. But there were nagging concerns with the STR-9 that Glock fixed a long time ago. The STR-9's magazines do not drop free, so you will not run a combat course in record time with this gun. The rear sight coming loose isn't worth nagging about, and while it could have happened to any handgun, it hasn't happened to many we've tested. The magazines were very difficult to load, going past an inconvenience to a genuine deal breaker. They were simply too stiff and never lightened enough for the raters to comfortably load the magazines to full capacity. In most ways, the STR-9 is a reliable half-price Glock, but we wouldn't buy it.

● The Rex Delta is smaller than the Stoeger in most dimensions, equally reliable, and exhibited no problems with the trigger, magazine, slide lock, or accuracy. The bottom line is the Rex Delta is well worth a few more dollars than the STR-9.

● When we began these tests, we were looking for economical handguns that will serve well for personal defense. One of the raters pointed out that most of us need a larger gun and a smaller gun — one for home defense and carry under a jacket, the other for concealed carry under a polo shirt. The Rex Delta is a compromise that would do well in either role.

*Written and photographed by GUN TESTS Staff, using evaluations from GUN TESTS team testers. **GT***



# Replicas of Famous Firearms, Part 1: Walther, Chiappa, GSG

*Our test group included two 22 LR semi-autos from Carl Walther, the HK MP5 A5 and Colt M4, the Chiappa Arms M1 Carbine, and GSG's StG44. One rifle was truest to the original, practical, and fun.*

**M**any shooters have a deep interest in military history, and almost everyone likes to go plinking. Our test items for this article combine the two. We have tested eight different military replica firearms that fire the 22 Long Rifle cartridge. The earliest replica is from the later days of World War II, and the latest is as fresh as today.

Our test group consisted of men and women shooters of varying stature, experience and skill. They evaluated the guns for fit, finish, reliability, ease of use, practical accuracy, and fun. We received some very candid feedback from this group. For the plinking evaluation, we shot outdoors at a 12-by-18-

inch oval steel gong placed 50 yards from the firing line. Some testing days were hot and some were cold, so we think we have a good idea how these rifles will perform in realistic conditions.

Formal accuracy testing was performed at a very nice indoor range, Boyert Shooting Center (Boyert.com) in Katy, Texas, where we fired five 5-round groups at 25 yards from a bench. Because we expect these rifles to be purchased and used as fun plinkers, we tested using three different kinds of economy bulk ammunition: Aguila 40-grain round nose, Federal 36-grain round nose, and Winchester white box 40-grain hollow points. None of these loads would qualify as expensive target loads, so it is likely that each rifle would be more accurate with a preferred target load. While each rifle showed ammunition preferences for reliability and accuracy, velocities were reasonably consistent across the different rifles for each brand of ammunition. By the time

**Clockwise from top left: Our test group included the Carl Walther Colt M4, the Chiappa Arms M1 Carbine, Carl Walther's rimfire interpretation of the HK MP5 A5, and GSG's StG44.**



Carl Walther Colt M4



Chiappa Arms M1 Carbine



GSG StG44



Carl Walther HK MP5 A5



## SPECIALTY FIREARMS

we completed testing, each of these rifles had several hundreds of rounds put through them without cleaning.

Our test group included two sets of 22 LR firearms, the first of which included the Carl Walther HK MP5 A5, the Chiappa Arms M1 Carbine, the Carl Walther Colt M4, and GSG's StG44. In an upcoming test, we'll review the second set, which includes Anschütz's RX-22 SCAR along with the very similar ISSC SCAR, the Carl Walther HK/416 D145RS, and Smith & Wesson's M&P 15-22. This article focuses on the first four firearms. Let's see which rifles were truest to the original arms while being practical and fun:

### Walther Arms HK MP5 A5 5780310 22 LR, \$600+

About the original: The HK MP5 is an iconic firearm developed in the 1960s as a 9mm submachine gun and is one of the most successful designs in history, with more than 100 variants fielded by military and police forces from more than 40 countries worldwide. It has also starred in countless movies, TV shows, and video games. (Something seen in every movie is someone slapping down the non-reciprocating bolt handle to charge the firearm.) Manufactured under license in eight different countries, the MP5 has been around for over 50 years and is still in production today. The A5 variant has a retractable stock and a four-position trigger group that includes safe, semi auto, 3-round burst, and full-auto options. A compact firearm, the MP5A5 is less than 22 inches long with the stock collapsed and less than 7 pounds in weight. With a 9-inch barrel, the MP5 fires from the closed-bolt position using H&K's unique roller-delayed blowback action, similar to the G3 automatic rifle fielded by the German Bundeswehr from 1959 to 1997. In a very simplistic description of a roller-delayed blowback action, friction created by rollers on either side of a wedge cause a slight delay in unlocking the bolt, allowing gas pressures to drop to safe levels before extracting the cartridge case. This mechanism allows for a lighter bolt and recoil spring for the same cartridge power, which yields a lighter firearm that is easier to rack. These are desirable traits in a compact submachine gun. Another feature that is unique to H&K firearms is the rotary drum rear sight. The drum has a notch and three apertures. The notch is for close range and low light usage. The three apertures are for 200-, 300-, and 400-meter ranges. This sturdy and flexible system is very easy and intuitive to use. The front sight is a front post well protected in a hooded ring. The MP5 is usually fed from a 30- or 40-round straight box magazine released by an ambidextrous paddle in front of the trigger guard. Overall, the user-friendly

<b>Manufacturer</b>	<b>Walther Arms HK MP5 A5 5780310 22 LR, \$390</b>
<b>Action Type</b>	Blowback semi-auto, polymer lower, aluminum upper, black paint
<b>Overall Length</b>	26.8 to 33.8 in.
<b>Overall Height w/o Scope</b>	8.5 in.
<b>Maximum Width</b>	2.2 in.
<b>Weight Unloaded</b>	7.0 lbs.
<b>Magazine Capacity</b>	25; plastic box with thumb assist
<b>Barrel</b>	16.1 in. long; black carbon steel
<b>Buttstock</b>	Collapsible; metal rails, plastic butt
<b>Stock Length of Pull</b>	6.6 to 12.9 in.
<b>Fore-end</b>	Triangular plastic
<b>Trigger</b>	6.1 lbs., two stage
<b>Safety Style</b>	Lever, ambidextrous
<b>Magazine Release Style</b>	Paddle, ambidextrous
<b>Front Sight</b>	Hooded post, elevation adj.
<b>Rear Sight</b>	Drum, elevation and windage adj.
<b>Sight Radius</b>	13.2 in.
<b>Receiver Optic Treatment</b>	None
<b>Warranty</b>	1 year, limited
<b>Telephone</b>	(479) 646-4210
<b>Website</b>	WaltherArms.com
<b>Country of Manufacture</b>	Germany

H&K MP5 is a solid, reliable and compact weapon that has withstood the test of time.

Our test rifle is the first official Heckler & Koch MP5 chambered in 22 LR, this one is a replica manufactured by Carl Walther. Imported by Umarex, the Walther-made MP5 A5 has H&K markings, and most of the testers thought it was very close in appearance to the military version. While not being manufactured at this time, it is still very popular and available on the used market for between \$600 and \$900. This is very expensive for a 22, but it's still a fraction of the cost for a 9mm SMG that can cost more than \$30,000! Our example was a loaner that showed almost no wear.

It was built in Germany with a match-grade precision barrel, metal receiver, MP5 standard forearm, and retractable stock. It also has a Navy pistol grip as well as HK-style sights and an imitation three-lug flash suppressor to maintain authenticity. The compensator was attached so that the 16.1-inch barrel extends the full length of the gun and compensator. The magazine is made of high-strength polymer and is designed with grips for the spring on both sides, making it simple to load. There are 25- and 10-round versions of the magazine available. Both are proportionate in size to the centerfire version's magazine to maintain the authentic look of the 9mm MP5's magazine.

While the weight of the rimfire Walther was the same as the 9mm, the 22 LR is 4 inches longer to

**Chiappa Citadel CIR22M1W  
M1-22 22 LR, \$300**

 Blowback semi-auto,  
aluminum, black paint

35.0 in.

7.1 in.

2 in.

4.7 lbs.

10; plastic with no thumb assist

18 in. long;

black carbon steel; flat crown

 One piece wood; walnut stain,  
metal buttplate

13.25 in.

Wood

6.9 lbs., single stage

Lever

Button

Post with protective ears

Plastic peep,

elevation and windage adj.

22 in.

Dovetail under rear sight

1 year, limited

(937) 835-5000

ChiappaFirearms.com

Italy

**German Sport Guns GSG-StG44  
GERGSTG44 22 LR, \$330**

 Blowback semi-auto,  
zinc receiver, black paint

37.3 in.

8.7 in.

2.2 in.

9.15 lbs.

25; plastic box with thumb assist

16.3 in. long; 6 grooves;

black carbon steel

Two-piece wood;

walnut stain

14.5 in.

Ventilated; stamped steel

8.2 lbs., two stage

Lever, safe down

Button

Hooded post

Metal ladder;

elevation and windage adj.

17.1 in.

None

2 year, limited

(585) 328-2212

AmericanTactical.us

Germany

**Walther Arms Colt M4  
Carbine 5760300 22 LR, \$350**

 Blowback semi-auto,  
aluminum receiver, black paint

31.1 to 34.4 in.

9.1 in.

2.6 in.

6.0 lbs.

30; plastic box with thumb assist

16.1 in. long; 1:13.75 twist;

black Parkerized carbon steel

6 position CAR; black polymer;

serrated plastic buttplate

10.9 to 13.9 in.

Round plastic

8.4 lbs.; two stage

2 position, 180 degree

Button

Protected post, elevation adj.

Detachable handle,

elevation and windage adj.

14.8 in.

Picatinny rail

1 year, limited

(479) 646-4210

WaltherArms.com

Germany

accommodate the 16-inch barrel required to meet Federal regulations. It is a straight blowback action, as opposed to the roller-delayed version, and includes a fake suppressor that screws on and off. A real suppressor could potentially be screwed on with an adapter, but the 16-inch barrel is pencil thin and might not support the weight without affecting accuracy. The fake suppressor does a very nice job of protecting the muzzle from damage.

The Walther's triangular handguard, lower receiver, pistol grip, and butt plate are a high-quality polymer, with the remainder being metal. Finish on the firearm was very even and has held up well to usage. The finish on the fake suppressor showed more wear. The cocking handle was checkered on both sides and functioned just like the 9mm SMG. The sights are metal and very similar to the standard setup, with the exception that the rear drum sight did not have the V-slot and the apertures only changed sizes and not elevation. The ambidextrous safety is plastic and had two positions. These positions were marked Safe (in white) and Fire (in red) and use the standard H&K pictographs. The magazine release has both a button on the right side and an ambidextrous paddle in front of the oversized trigger guard.

The two-stage trigger averaged a little over 6 pounds with a lot of light take-up, a spongy release, and moderate overtravel. The one control that gave the



**Walther Arms HK MP5 A5  
5780310 22 LR, \$390**

**Chiappa Citadel CIR22M1W  
22 LR, \$300**

**German Sport Guns  
GSG-StG44 GERGSTG44  
22 LR, \$330**

**Walther Arms Colt M4  
Carbine 5760300 22 LR, \$350**

testers trouble was the latch for the collapsible stock. When locked, the extended stock was surprisingly stable and provided a good cheek weld. However, the latch frequently slipped to the unlocked position, causing the stock to collapse. As a result, the testers felt like they could not trust the gun to stay locked.

## SPECIALTY FIREARMS

Finally, one of the testers found that the latch would stay locked by holding the stock very tight to the shoulder. The Walther is not forgiving of sloppy technique nor stable when bringing the gun up to a

firing position. This frustrated all the shooters and figured into the final score.

The testers looked forward to testing the H&K/Walther MP5. Many of the younger testers were

### 22 LR RANGE DATA

#### **Aguila 40-grain Round Nose**

Average Velocity  
Muzzle Energy  
Smallest Group  
Average Group

#### **Walther Arms HK MP5 A5**

1094 fps  
106 ft.-lbs.  
1.2 in.  
1.4 in.

#### **Chiappa M1-22**

1144 fps  
116 ft.-lbs.  
0.5 in.  
0.7 in.

#### **GSG StG44**

1138 fps  
115 ft.-lbs.  
0.8 in.  
0.9 in.

#### **Walther Arms Colt M4**

1090 fps  
105 ft.-lbs.  
0.9 in.  
1.1 in.

#### **Federal 40-grain Round Nose**

Average Velocity  
Muzzle Energy  
Smallest Group  
Average Group

#### **Walther Arms HK MP5 A5**

1145 fps  
116 ft.-lbs.  
0.5 in.  
1.0 in.

#### **Chiappa M1-22**

1165 fps  
121 ft.-lbs.  
0.8 in.  
0.9 in.

#### **GSG StG44**

1150 fps  
117 ft.-lbs.  
1.3 in.  
1.3 in.

#### **Walther Arms Colt M4**

1105 fps  
108 ft.-lbs.  
0.7 in.  
0.8 in.

#### **Winchester 36-grain Hollow Point**

Average Velocity  
Muzzle Energy  
Smallest Group  
Average Group

#### **Walther Arms HK MP5 A5**

1247 fps  
124 ft.-lbs.  
1.1 in.  
1.2 in.

#### **Chiappa M1-22**

1262 fps  
127 ft.-lbs.  
1.5 in.  
1.6 in.

#### **GSG StG44**

1253 fps  
125 ft.-lbs.  
0.9 in.  
1.0 in.

#### **Walther Arms Colt M4**

1242 fps  
123 ft.-lbs.  
0.9 in.  
1.1 in.

*We averaged the results from five five-shot groups for accuracy. We recorded velocity with a Magnaspeed V3 Chronograph (SKU 628777, MidwayUSA, \$380) at the muzzle. Temperature at the time of testing ranged from 70 to 75 degrees. All groups were fired indoors at Boyert Shooting Centers in Katy, Texas (Boyert.com) from a bench with a sandbag at 25 yards. Ammo source: Academy Sports and Outdoors.*

The Walther Arms/Colt M4 grouped very well with the Federal ammunition, shooting 0.8-inch average groups at 25 yards.



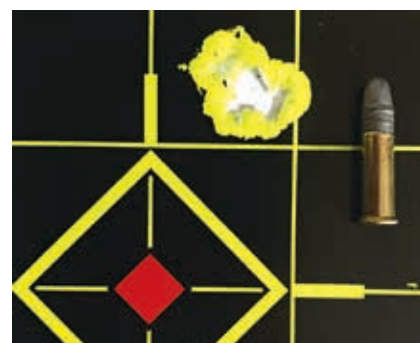
The Chiappa M1-22 was very accurate and reliable with the Aguila ammunition, shooting 0.7-inch average groups at 25 yards.



Not only did the GSG StG44 look good, but this group shows how well it shot with the Aguila ammunition, 0.9-inch average groups at 25 yards.



As long as we kept the stock locked up, the Walter was fairly accurate with the Federal ammunition, shooting 1-inch average groups at 25 yards.





particularly excited about a gun that figures so prominently in film and video games. The Walther also got its share of looks on the firing line. The 25-round magazine was long enough that firing from the bench was a little awkward. When firing off hand, the testers found the gun compact but a little front heavy. Surprisingly, petite shooters did not find this gun very comfortable. When stable, the Walther regularly hit the steel gong at 50 yards. However, all shooters expressed frustration with the stock unlocking. The controls worked well and the rifle was easy to use in the cold with gloves. The video gamers in the group thought the MP5 was a lot of fun to shoot.

In formal accuracy testing, the Walther performed very well with the Federal 40-grain roundnose ammunition, averaging 1.0-inch groups. This rifle performed adequately with the Winchester 36-grain hollowpoint load, averaging 1.2 inch groups. The MP5 was the worst rifle in the test with the Aguila 40-grain roundnose, averaging 1.4 inches groups. For all ammo brands, we noticed that many of the groups had a cluster with a flyer that substantially opened up the groups. We suspect that the gun could have shot very well, but the loose stock may have contributed to that pattern. On the plus side, the MP5 experienced no functional failures of any kind during testing. This is unusually reliable performance for a semi-auto rimfire.

**Our Team Said:** Our testers appreciated the historical accuracy of the Walther HK MP5 A5 replica. They would like to see it produced it again to help bring prices down. The rifle was popular with the younger video gamers in the group. We found it to be compact, easy to use, reliable and potentially very accurate. The testers really wanted to rate the gun very highly. However, the collapsible stock lived up to its description and proved to be the Achilles heel of the firearm.

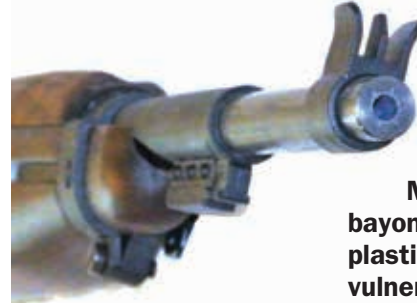
#### **Chiappa Citadel CIR22M1W 22 LR, \$300**

The U.S. Carbine, Caliber .30, M1 is one of the iconic weapons fielded by the U.S. Army in WWII. Designed as an intermediate arm between the issue 1911A1 pistol and the M1 Garand, the semi-automatic M1 was intended as a lightweight, defensive arm for support troops and specialist front line troops (tankers, radiomen, paratroopers, and officers). The M1 Carbine fired the .30 Carbine round (7.62x33mm) with 110-grain FMJ bullets at a velocity of 1990 fps with 967 foot-pounds of energy out of an 18-inch barrel. In comparison, the 1911's 45 ACP produced 356 foot-pounds of energy and the M1 Garand produced 2656 foot-pounds of energy. The 36-inch 5-pound M1 Carbine is very handy, and the light recoil makes it easy to shoot. These traits make the M1 Carbine a favorite among modern-day shooters and collectors. This popularity, and the age of the platform, also makes buying a historical M1 Carbine an expensive proposition. An unaltered vintage piece in good

**The Colt keeps the standard M4 barrel profile. You have to loosen the flash hider to break the rifle down for cleaning.**



**While the Chiappa's barrel profile is very similar to a classic M1 Carbine, the bayonet lug is actually plastic. The flat crown is vulnerable to damage.**



**The sights were good on the StG44. The gas adjustment rod was decorative in this case.**



**The Walther had the same front and rear sights as the HK MP5. The bolt hold open was a nice safety feature. The "suppressor" isn't a suppressor, so there are no NFA worries.**



condition will likely cost more than \$1,000, and one in excellent condition can cost two to three times as much. What is a shooter to do if he wants to enjoy the M1 Carbine experience, but not spend thousands of dollars?

That is where the Chiappa M1-22 comes into play. A blowback, semi-automatic 22 LR replica of the famous M1 Carbine, the Chiappa certainly looks the part and is much more affordable at \$249, a recent price at BudsGunShop.com. Our M1-22 came in a simple cardboard box with two 10-round magazines, a chamber flag and a basic manual with very few illustrations. A minor gripe about the manual is that the opening historical note clearly confuses the M1 Garand with the M1 Carbine.

The Chiappa M1-22 weighed 4.7 pounds, about half-pound lighter than the real thing, and at 35 inches long overall, it was very close to being a historically accurate sizing. The magazines are made of a sturdy polymer and could be loaded to capacity, but they lacked any kind of thumb assist to facilitate easier loading. The wooden stock is of the later "low wood" configuration and include the classic oiler sling-mounting system (though an oiler is not included).

## SPECIALTY FIREARMS



**The Colt has most of the standard controls; however, the bolt release is strictly cosmetic.**

While fairly well fitted, the wooden upper handguard rattled. The stock was simply finished but could have used additional sanding.

The 18-inch barrel had a flat crown that might be vulnerable to damage. The metal elsewhere was well finished; however, we believe there is a lot of cheap, low-quality plastic on this gun. Plastic parts include the bayonet lug, front barrel band, operating rod, trigger group, and sights. The last two items raised a concern. The sights are adjustable and could see a lot of wear over the years. In particular, the rear sight caused concern because the windage screw was metal fitted into plastic, and the peep sight slides up and down a ramp with plastic detents. This will almost certainly wear poorly.

A bigger problem is the trigger group, or more specifically, the controls that are part of the trigger group. The safety is flimsy and does not inspire confidence, our testers said.

Our sample rifle was actually the second rifle procured for the test. The first rifle suffered a failure of the magazine release button. As a result, the first gun was inoperable and it was removed from the test. While this would likely be fixed under warranty, we have an obligation to provide full disclosure of our testing experience. As owner disassembly is not advisable, we recommend the use of a pull-through cleaning rope to clean from the breech.

Once we had procured a usable sample, testing began with an enthusiastic testing group. Everyone commented on how light and handy the M1-22 was to hold. Our smaller shooters really liked holding the Chiappa. While not as exotic as the StG44, the M1-22 still got a lot of interest on the firing line. Working the action was light, but a little notchy. The sights were easy to use and adjust, with protective ears for the front post. The peep-style sights made target acquisition quick and accurate, with a long sight radius of 22 inches. The single-stage trigger on the Chiappa was surprisingly good at just under 7 pounds, with little take up, a crisp release, and little overtravel. The later-style lever safety swings 180 degrees, with Safe being in the forward and down positions and Fire to the rear. While there is a discernible click at the bottom position, the firearm



**The StG44's grip style is consistent with the historical firearm. The magazine went into the rifle easily. The controls were large and easy to use, though the safety was a bit of a reach for smaller hands.**

is historically accurate with no markings to indicate firing readiness. The magazine inserted easily but did not drop freely when released. The magazine reliably held the bolt open when empty, but the historically accurate bolt-hold-back button did not consistently continue to keep the bolt open. In fact, the bolt would usually close as soon as the magazine was released. Still, the magazine-bolt hold open prevented dry firing, which is important to preserve the firing pin and chamber in a rimfire. The rifle was accurate, with hits on the 50-yard gong easy to secure. The Aguila and Federal ammunition proved very reliable, but the Winchester suffered about a 30% jam rate. This pickiness is common behavior for a semi-auto rimfire. Because the other two brands encountered no issues, this was not considered to be a critical fault.

In formal accuracy testing, the M1-22 performed very well with the Aguila 40-grain RN ammunition, with 0.7-inch average groups and Federal 40-grain RN with 0.9-inch average groups. This rifle did not perform well with the Winchester 36-grain HP load, averaging the worst group of 1.6 inches and frequently jamming. This specific rifle did not care for the Winchester ammunition in any way. Again, this sort of ammunition preference is common behavior for a 22 LR semi-automatic firearm. Still, the Chiappa proved to be very accurate with the loads it preferred.

**Our Team Said:** The older testers appreciated the historical accuracy of the Chiappa M1 Carbine replica. The rifle found favor with our smaller shooters due to the petite dimensions. It had a good trigger and was very accurate with the ammunition it liked. However, quality issues are a serious concern. Poor material choices in the name of economy prevent this carbine from meeting expectations. Research also uncovered multiple reports of earlier versions of the rifle suffering catastrophic action failures. While these were evidently covered under warranty, we strongly recommend caution if buying an early example. Our own experience with the magazine release of the first sample also concerned us. While the gun had much potential, safety and quality issues prevent us from recommending the Chiappa M1-22.





Our sample Chiappa M1 did not like the Winchester 36-grain ammo. The other two brands worked fine. Ammo issues are common problem for rimfires.

**Walther Arms Colt M4 Carbine 5760300  
22 LR, \$350**

The M4 is a shorter and lighter version of the M16, a story is well known to many of our readers. In short: Gene Stoner, chief engineer of the ArmaLite division of Fairchild Aircraft (of A-10 Warthog fame) began working in 1954 on the AR-10 rifle in 7.62x51mm NATO. Submitted for US Army evaluation trials in 1956, the AR-10 was a revolutionary design with an innovative straight-line barrel stock arrangement for reduced recoil, advanced ergonomics, and heavy usage of lightweight materials such as aluminum and plastic. When the U.S. Army did not accept the AR-10, Stoner commenced working on a smaller, even lighter version called the AR-15, chambered in what would become the 5.56x45mm NATO round. Initially finding favor with the U.S. Air Force, the M16 was eventually accepted into service and became the standard U.S. rifle in 1969.

The M16 design has been updated several times over the last 50 years. With more frequent close-quarter combat in urban environments and increased deployment of riflemen from vehicles by U.S. armed forces, there was a desire for a lighter and more compact version of the M-16. In 1966, Colt came out with the XM177 "Commando" carbine with a shortened barrel. The Commando was also usually fitted with a collapsible stock that made it even more compact. Very popular with U.S. Special Forces, the Commando was very lightweight and handy. In 1984, Colt began working on the XM4 design in an effort to combine the best features of the Commando with the latest upgrades to the M16 rifles. Officially adopted in 1994, the M4 saw heavy usage during peacekeeping and anti-terrorist conflicts and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

By 2005, the M4 was the primary weapon for all forward-deployed Army forces. By 2015, the M4 was designated the primary weapon for the U.S. Marine Corps and is now in service around the globe. The closest civilian version of the M4 available from Colt is probably the LE 6920 series. At \$1,099 each, they are not exactly cheap. Would its replica be reliable and accurate enough to make the 22 LR a good training tool for the real thing?

The replica M4 built by Carl Walther under exclusive



The Walther was very compact and handy. However, the stock had a tendency to collapse while firing. This made it less fun to shoot. The Walther looks almost identical to a suppressed HK MP5 A5. The only give away is the magazine.

license from Colt Manufacturing costs as little as \$300 at CDNN. A shooter can buy a lot of 22 LR ammo for the \$800 difference! This blowback, semi-auto rifle has a 16.2-inch barrel, weighs 6 pounds, and comes with a 30-round magazine. Additional magazines are available for \$30. An almost exact look-alike to the M4, the Colt has a round polymer handguard, a Picatinny flattop, finger-groove pistol grip, and collapsible buttstock. The Colt even has the M203 barrel contour and bayonet lug.

The bolt handle is at the rear of the receiver like a standard M4. The dust cover opens but did not stay closed on our example. The magazine release functions identically to an M4's. The two-position 180-degree safety lever is positive, with Fire clearly marked to the rear. The black-anodized aluminum receiver is similar but not precisely the same as a M4. Only the rear pin comes out when you want to field-strip the firearm. To remove the rear pin, you must loosen the flash hider to relieve tension on the rear pin. Once you remove the rear pin, proceed to split open the receiver and clean the bolt.

Use a bore rope or flexible rod to clean the barrel from the breech end of the rifle. We recommend that you watch the video on field-stripping, cleaning, and adjustments created by Walther for a good overview. Other differences in the receiver include a non-functioning bolt release and forward-assist controls. The Colt's carrying handle is standard M4 and securely fastens to the top rail. The sights are also standard M4 issue. The triangular framed front sight is well protected and can be adjusted for elevation. The rear sight is well protected and includes a peep sight with large and small apertures. The rear sight is adjustable for both elevation and windage. The two-stage trigger had light take up, average release, and moderate overtravel. The trigger was a little heavy, averaging 8.4 pounds, but it did not seem to affect practical accuracy.

Most of the testing panel felt very familiar with the Colt/Walther. Even the one tester with minimal AR experience found the controls very intuitive. All the testers thought that the Colt looked very realistic. They particularly thought having the "rampant Colt" trademark stamped on the receiver was a nice touch. ARs have become so commonplace that nobody really

## SPECIALTY FIREARMS

The Walther Colt M4's peep sights were well protected and very easy to use.



The rampant Colt logo on the M4's receiver is a nice touch.



While the Chiappa action looks great, the sights and controls are plastic and came across as very cheap and flimsy. The Chiappa action does include an authentic-looking button to hold the bolt open.

noticed yet another one on the firing line.

The testers thought the magazines were sturdy and easy to load with a thumb assist on either side of the magazine. The magazines go into the well easily and latch with a positive click. The bolt is held open by the magazine when the rifle is empty. The experienced rimfire shooters like this because it should reduce wear over time to the chamber's edge due to dry firing. The bolt stays open when the magazine is released. The testers liked that the magazine dropped freely because it made the Colt more suitable as a training tool. Because the bolt release is purely cosmetic, the user must pull back the bolt handle to release the bolt. The testers did not like this because most of them use the bolt release as part of their magazine change drill. The testers found the rifle easy to use in the cold with gloves.

All our testers found the rifle easy to use from the standing position. The Colt was the favorite for our petite shooters due to its light weight and adjustable buttstock. Some of our testers did not like the pistol grip. The panel did not consider this to be a major issue because the pistol grip can be easily changed. Practical accuracy with the Colt was excellent, with all testers scoring easy hits on the gong using the peep sights. We shot more than 500 rounds through



The Walther had the same drum style rear sight as the HK MP5.



While the StG44's sights were clear and easy to use, the sight radius was short.



The Schmeisser markings on the StG44 were a nice nod to the rifle's forebear. While heavy, the StG44 looked authentic and held very steady on target.

the rifle in both hot and cold conditions. The rifle was remarkably reliable, with no failures to function experienced in any of our tests. The Colt is user adjustable if the shooter experiences issues with misfires. The adjustment screw is in the back of the bolt. Again, watch the Walther video for instructions.

The Colt excelled in formal 25-yard accuracy testing. The Aguila 40-grain roundnose and Winchester 32-grain hollowpoints both averaged 1.1-inch groups. The Federal 40-grain roundnose was the star of the show with a 0.8-inch average-size group. What was remarkable was how consistently accurate the Colt grouped, with no flyers showing on any of the targets.

**Our Team Said:** We appreciated the look and feel of the Colt/Walther M4. Compact and lightweight, all our shooters found it very comfortable to shoot, accurate, and unfailingly reliable. The Colt was the favorite of our most petite shooter. However, the more experienced AR shooters were disappointed in some of its limitations as a training tool and slightly downgraded the rifle as a result. Nonetheless, we can recommend the Colt as a fun and accurate rifle that almost anyone can enjoy.

### German Sport Guns GSG-StG44 GERGSTG44 22 LR, \$330

The Sturmgewehr 44, commonly abbreviated as the StG44, was one of the earliest examples of what



became known as assault rifles. First introduced by the Germans on the Eastern Front in 1944, the StG44 was a gas-operated select-fire (semi- and full-auto) rifle with a pistol grip and box magazine. The original rifle's intermediate 7.92x33mm Kurz cartridge (123-grain spitzer at 2250 fps for 1391 foot-pounds of energy) and in-line design helped mitigate recoil during automatic fire. Reputed to work well in the cold and be surprisingly accurate, the StG44 possessed many of the characteristics now considered standard features of modern assault rifles. A collector today should expect to pay tens of thousands of dollars to add a historical StG44 to his or her collection.

The German Sport Guns GSG StG44 in 22 LR is a more modern blowback rimfire replica of the StG44 assault rifle. It is also much more reasonably priced, with a MSRP of \$529 and a street price of \$330 at CDNN Sports (CDNNSports.com). It comes with one 25-round magazine, and additional magazines are easy to find around \$30 apiece. The rifle makes an immediate great impression, as our example came in a sturdy replica wooden crate with a modified Waffenamt stamp and American Tactical StG44 burnt onto the lid.

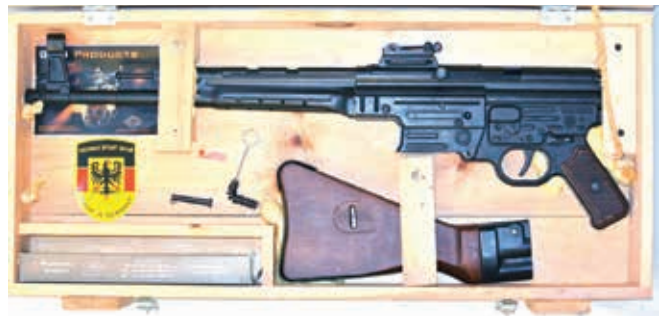
Opening the latches of the box revealed the StG44 broken down into two sections, the barreled receiver and a wooden buttstock. It was simple enough to assemble by connecting the two pieces and inserting the included spring-loaded pin. Care is advised when removing the rifle from the crate to prevent the upper and lower receivers from opening and spilling the parts from the action. If this does happen (and it will happen eventually), it is very easy to re-assemble the action using the detailed and illustrated instructions included in the excellent manual.

The rifle was accurately sized at 37.3 inches long with a 16.3-inch barrel. While heavy at 9.15 pounds, this is still a full pound lighter than an original StG44 and felt well balanced between the hands. Fit and finish were historically accurate, which in this case means very basic, with lots of metal stampings and simply finished wood. The metal finishing was very evenly applied and has held up well to heavy usage. Considering the manufacturing difficulties encountered by the Third Reich at the end of WWII, the GSG edition of the gun would probably qualify as a very-high-quality example. The Schmeisser-marked receiver appeared to be stamped out of a zinc-alloy material. We took the opportunity to show this rifle to a senior gunsmith at an internationally recognized gun shop. He expressed no concerns with the material used in the receiver. In fact, we thought that the material provided an accurate look and feel to the piece. While plastic is used for some parts with little concern, our testers were not fond of the plastic cocking handle. However, it has held up well under heavy usage.

The buttstock and grooved pistol-grip panels are



**Above: GSG shipped the StG44 in this wooden crate. The crate had a Waffenamt logo (the German Army Weapons Agency) burned into the top. Below: The StG44 was easy to assemble, but the action spring and bolt will pop out if the shooter lets the receiver separate too much.**



made from simple, straight-grained wood with a basic, but well applied, finish. In fact, the only part of the rifle that showed any wear at all over the course of our shooting were the pistol-grip panels, which showed some slight wear. The gunsmith noted that there was nothing in the GSG design that would concern him in the unlikely event that a repair was required. Breakdown is just as simple as assembly and is well described in the included manual. Since this firearm has a split receiver, this is an easy rimfire to clean from the breech. Because improper cleaning damages many rimfires, this is a potential longevity advantage for the GSG and should certainly help with long-term reliability.

Every tester was excited to try out the GSG StG44, and the rifle created a stir on the range every time we took it out. Many shooters of the younger generation know the StG44 well from modern video games. Shooting the StG44 was an enjoyable experience for most shooters. There was almost no recoil due to the weight. Some of the shooters found the weight made the rifle more tiring to shoot for long periods from a standing position. The sights consisted of a pyramid front post and a V-notch rear, with spacing geared more toward precision than speed. The sights are black and were a little difficult to see in low light or against a black background. They were very clear and easy to use in an outdoor setting. The sights are easy

## SPECIALTY FIREARMS



The Walther Arms Colt 22 LR M4 looks almost identical to the standard-issue Colt centerfire rifle.

**GUN TESTS GRADE: B**



From the side, the Chiappa looks very much like a classic M1 Carbine. While the Chiappa looks very similar to a classic M1 Carbine, too many of the parts were made of plastic.

**GUN TESTS GRADE: F (1ST SAMPLE)**

**GUN TESTS GRADE: C (2ND SAMPLE)**



The GSG StG44 action had very similar stampings to what you would find on the historical firearm. The StG44 looked like a clean example of a vintage gun. The bolt hold open was a nice safety feature.

**GUN TESTS GRADE: A (OUR PICK)**



The Walther's collapsible stock had a tendency to come loose when firing. This caused the shooters to lose confidence when shooting. If the stock malfunction were corrected, we would raise the score to an **A**. However, as tested, the stock limited the enjoyment of the firearm and was completely unacceptable for the price.

**GUN TESTS GRADE: C**

to adjust, using a button for elevation and a knurled knob for windage, but our example tended to shoot much lower than marked. Research indicated that while the sights are marked for historical accuracy, they are actually designed to work at rimfire distances. Just drop the last zero and it will get you close to the target range.

The two-stage trigger had a long, light take up with a crisp release and moderate overtravel. While it was one of the heavier triggers at slightly more than 8 pounds, shooters noted the trigger was very smooth and easy to use. The rifle was an accurate plinker. One shooter noted that it was so easy to hit the target that it was almost boring. Another shooter expressed surprise at how similar the GSG StG44 was to gameplay of the StG44 in his favorite video game. The 25-round magazine loaded easily and inserted easily. The magazine-release button was on the left side of the action, very large, well checkered and very positive in its usage, but the magazine did not drop free. None of the testers considered this a problem because the magazine release button was so large that even those with small hands could easily remove the magazine while pressing the release. The bolt was held open when the magazine went empty. While some have reported problems with the bolt hold open, our example exhibited no issues.

The left-side two-position safety was large and sturdy with Fire marked in red at the up position.

All the controls were easy to use for testers of all shapes and sizes. We found the GSG StG44 very easy to use in cold weather with gloves due to the enlarged trigger guard, large magazine release and safety, and easy-to-grasp cocking handle.

In formal accuracy testing, the StG44 performed well with the Aguila 40-grain roundnose ammunition with 0.9-inch average groups and Winchester 36-grain hollowpoints with 1.0-inch average groups. This rifle was one of only two rifles that did not perform well with the 40-grain Federal roundnose load, averaging the second worse group of 1.3 inches. Again, this kind of ammunition preference is normal behavior for a 22 LR semi-automatic firearm. We shot more than 500 rounds through the rifle in both hot and cold conditions. The GSG StG44 did not experience a single failure to function of any kind. This is remarkable performance for a semi-automatic rimfire using bulk ammunition.

**Our Team Said:** We appreciated the historical accuracy of the GSG StG44 replica. The rifle was a surprise hit with the younger video gamers in the group and the StG44 turned heads wherever we went. We found it to be accurate and unfailingly reliable. Though it was a little heavy, everyone found it easy to use and a lot of fun to shoot.

*Written and photographed by David Tannahill,  
using evaluations from GUN TESTS  
team testers. **GT***



# Driving Holsters Compared

*We look for the best holsters for driving, sitting for long periods, and by extension, riding a horse or motorcycle. We found a number of good choices, though some are pricey.*

**A** few months ago a reader asked for a match up on holsters suitable for use while driving. A standard inside-the-waistband (IWB) model, worn over the right pocket, is not only impossible to draw from when driving, it can be uncomfortable. A strong-side holster is much the same. Thus, the first choice for driving use seems to be a crossdraw model. Offering a holster that rides on the front of the body rather than behind the hip, the crossdraw is suitable for use when seated. The crossdraw has advantages of access and comfort when driving. You are not sitting on the holster, and it doesn't dig into the ribs.

We found a number of suitable scabbards that are a good cross section of what is available. They were tested by the raters during long drives, road trips, and daily commutes. We also drew from the holsters a minimum of 100 draws during the test. We rated them on the balance of speed and retention as well as access. The price is always important, of course. We found that the most expensive holsters were very pleasing to the eye and worked well, but there were affordable designs as well.

## Wright Leather Works Regulator Cross Draw Holster, \$105

Available from WrightLeatherWorks.com, we ordered a Regulator for a 3-inch-barrel revolver. After inspecting the fit and finish and seeing how the holster rides on the belt, our most experienced rater gave the Regulator high marks. He has written a book devoted solely to holsters. He felt the Regulator was a crossdraw version of the Avenger in some ways. The long spine of the Regulator features a belt loop that stabilizes the holster. The second belt loop, a tunnel loop design, cinches the holster close to the body. A reinforced welt keeps the holster from collapsing after the handgun is drawn. We feel that this is as good as it gets in a crossdraw holster. If you're willing to spend the money, the Wright Regulator gets good marks on every point.

**GUN TESTS GRADE: A**

## Bullard Leather Holsters Crossdraw for 1911 Series, \$90

We ordered this holster for a Commander 1911 45 ACP from BullardLeather.com. The steel-frame handgun used in the evaluation isn't the lightest gun. The Bullard holster is well molded and provided a good, snug fit. The fairly thick leather supports the

**We liked the Wright Leather Works Regulator. Note the strong, wide spine.**



**By design, a tight belt loop on the Wright Leather Works Regulator cinches the holster close to the body.**



**The Bullard Leather Crossdraw for 1911 Series handguns is among the most compact holsters tested.**



**After months of wear the Bullard holster is still tight and useful.**



## ACCESSORIES COMPARISON

weight of the handgun on the belt well. The double stitching of the body and belt loop are well done. The single rear loop is single stitched and compact. The holster features a prominent body shroud. We like this feature. The Bullard Crossdraw offers good fit and an excellent draw.

### GUN TESTS GRADE: A

#### Jeffrey Custom Leather BGT Body Guard Tension Adjust, \$149

This is the base price for the BGT holster at JeffreyCustomLeather.com. We added lining for \$35, bringing the as-tested price to \$145. This holster is molded for the Colt Government Model. The maker recommends another holster, the BTP, for handguns that are handle heavy. We found the Body Guard with Tension Adjust to be well made and well suited to crossdraw/driving use. The double stitching, saddle blocking, and molding are very well done. The body of the holster rides low, due to the belt loop rising from the holster body. This is a good point of the design. The rear tunnel loop cinches the holster in tight against the body. The holster features a strong holstering welt. The Body Guard features a strong reinforced sweat guard. It is hard waxed to maintain its shape. The tensioning device allows a good range of adjustment for those who require an easier draw to those who favor a sharp tug. There is also a well-designed sight track that would be a great advantage for those with a high-post sight. Draws were fast once we executed a few dozen presentations.

### GUN TESTS GRADE: A

#### Galco Gun Leather Underwraps Belly Band, \$62

Log on to GalcoGunLeather.com to see this maker's full line of products. The Underwraps Belly Band is listed under speciality holsters.

For those deploying smaller handguns, such as the popular slimline 9mms and the snubnose 38 Special revolver, the Underwraps is a viable in-car option. The holster features an elasticized nylon body with two leather pockets and two accessory pockets. The holster is available in small to XX-Large sizes. The draw may be adjusted for small-of-the-back draw and crossdraw, or even carrying two handguns. It is useful for appendix carry as well.

One of our GUN TESTS raters wore the Underwraps holster for a week straight during a road trip and vacation. He carried the Ruger LC9s in one pocket and cash in the accessory pocket, along with a spare magazine. He gave the set up high marks for practical use. We did rate the rig down a full grade because it collapses after the draw and does not allow an easy re-holster. On the plus side, unlike some cheaper bellybands, this one does not chafe the skin or cause undue perspiration.

### GUN TESTS GRADE: B



The Jeffrey Custom Leather BGT holster is well thought out. Above left arrow: Note tunnel loop for cinching the holster tightly against the body.



The Galco belly band held handguns up to a fairly large revolver such as the Colt Cobra.



The Galco belly band offers real utility. It wears under the pants or shirt.



The Galco belly band was tested with a CZ 40 among other handguns.



This leather pocket holds handguns securely. Body compression also holds the handgun close.



**Galco Gun Leather Phoenix  
Strong-Side/Crossdraw Belt Holster, \$159**

We got this holster from TombstoneTactical.com, ordering it for a 4-inch-barrel Colt Python. For many reasons, the crossdraw is well suited for outdoors use, and this is the original design intent of the Phoenix. For a heavy revolver or 1911 handgun, the Phoenix is a robust holster that offers a superior design for load bearing. The Phoenix features steer-hide construction, silicon suede lining, a reinforced thumb break, and excellent stitching. There is a sewn-in reinforced sight track. Fitting and molding are excellent. The Phoenix is useful for crossdraw and strong-side carry. The draw angle is good for crossdraw, with some compromise in the near neutral angle to allow the holster to serve as a strong-side holster as well. The stitching and lining make this holster and the Jeffrey Custom Leather holster possibly the two most desirable setups if you are willing to foot the bill. We really like the sight rail. The draw isn't the fastest, but this is a product of drawing a 4-inch-barrel revolver from crossdraw at a neutral angle. The rater uses his Python (it isn't a safe queen), so the silicon lining helped protect the finish, and when executing a fast draw, one of the raters noted that silicon is the equivalent of a gunfighter's hog-greased holster. The draw is very slick, if not fast. We rated the Phoenix down a half grade on draw speed, but some raters felt the versatility of the holster as strong-side unit was a valid trade off for a slightly slower presentation.

**GUN TESTS GRADE: A-**

**Galco Gun Leather Hornet  
Strong-Side/Crossdraw Belt Holster, \$79**

We ordered this holster from Brownells.com. The Hornet was designed for small-frame firearms. It is an affordable holster, but the handwork and molding are both well done. There was no break-in period. While single stitched, this is more than adequate for a lighter handgun. The draw angle is good for concealed carry, and the holster rides at a good angle for the draw. This is a fairly simple holster, but the molding and draw angle are ideal. There isn't a sewn-in sight track, but the holster body is slightly elongated, serving the same purpose with economy. This is a neat and compact holster.

**GUN TESTS GRADE: A**

**Tauris Holsters Standard Hip Holster, \$100**

This holster is available at TaurisHolsters.com. We elected to test at least one inside-the-waistband holster and found those designed to be worn as crossdraw set-ups are few and far between. We chose the Tauris Standard Hip Holster for the Colt Government Model 1911. We also ordered the special holster mouth trim, a \$10 option well worth this modest price. The leather molding is excellent. The fit and finish are good. We particularly liked the strong, reinforced spine, keeping



As one rater noted the Galco Phoenix holster is pure class. With an excellent tanning of the leather, twin tension screws, a built in sight track and reinforced thumb break retention strap, this is an excellent all around holster. The Galco Phoenix offers a good draw angle.



The Galco Hornet is a neat and compact holster for smaller handguns. While inexpensive the Galco Hornet features good stitching. No corners have been cut. We really like the Galco Hornet. It offers a good scabbard for use with lighter handguns.





## ACCESSORIES COMPARISON

The Tauris holsters IWB offers excellent utility. We were glad we ordered the optional covered holstering welt.



The belt attachment's easy and wide adjustment are what made the Tauris holster so versatile.



The Galco Switchback is a surprisingly capable handgun holster for the price and is well put together. We predict it will prove durable in use. After six months of testing it works well.



When drawing the weak side hand must always be out of the way. We were able to unsnap the Switchback safety strap with non dominant hand but this cannot always be counted on. The Switchback offers a good sharp draw.



the pistol aligned properly for a rapid presentation from concealed carry. The sight track is molded in, and the holster is hard waxed. The sweat guard, we feel, is essential for use with an IWB holster that is worn crossdraw. This extension of the holster body protects both the handgun from perspiration and the wearer's body from the sharp edges of the handgun. What makes the holster suitable for use with crossdraw is the adjustable belt loop. We are not certain this was part of the design, but it works well in this role. The loop is unsnapped and a set screw loosened. The user experiments with the angle of the draw until an ideal balance is found. This is an outstanding feature that we feel offers good versatility. While Tauris holsters also offers IWB holsters with dual belt loops that may spread the weight of the handgun about and offer a lower profile for carry in the standard IWB position, this holster's single belt loop is ideal for crossdraw use. We were able to set the tension on the belt loop so that a brush of the hand moves the holster in the proper direction for seated carry and moved it back for standing carry.

**GUN TESTS GRADE: A**

### Galco Gun Leather Switchback, \$46

We ordered the Switchback for a K-frame Smith & Wesson revolver with 4-inch barrel. The Switchback is a hybrid of leather and fabric. The exoskeleton is of steer hide, while the main body is fabric. The lining is padded and the bottom is closed. There is no tension adjustment. The screws that mate the steer hide to the fabric body do nothing else. The retention strap isn't a thumb break. The proper action is to run the trigger finger or third finger under the strap and pull it up as the revolver is drawn. There is a holster lip that protects the draw, to an extent. How does the Switchback compare to the Phoenix? The Switchback's layered ballistic nylon cell with foam is certainly durable, and it was comfortable to wear. Because it can be worn as a right- or left-hand holster or as a crossdraw, we found the Switchback is indeed versatile. We found the draw angle to be good for crossdraw. Its bulk is less than the Phoenix's. The Switchback doesn't offer the same retention as the Phoenix, but it is good enough. The draw can be sharp for those who practice.

We found that by using the third finger to unsnap the retention strap, there was little speed penalty in drawing the Switchback. While we prefer the Phoenix and some of the other more expensive holsters, the Switchback is a useful holster. We rated it down a half grade based on the security strap versus a thumb break, while admitting a thumb break on a dual-purpose left- and right-hand holster would be difficult to design.

**GUN TESTS GRADE: A- (BEST BUY)**

*Written and photographed by GUN TESTS staff. GT*

Under the provisions of the GCA, if a Reformation firearm is equipped with a barrel that is less than 18-inches in overall length, that firearm is classified to be a short-barreled shotgun (SBS). When a Reformation is configured as a GCA/SBS, specific provisions of the GCA apply to the transfer of that firearm from a Federal Firearms Licensee (FFL) to a non-licensee, and to the transport of that firearm by a non-licensee in interstate or foreign commerce. These provisions are:

1. 18 U.S.C. § 922(a)(4) requires that an individual wishing to transport an SBS in interstate or foreign commerce obtain approval by the Attorney General to transport the firearm.
2. 18 U.S.C. § 922(b)(4) requires authorization from the Attorney General consistent with public safety and necessity prior to the sale or delivery of an SBS to an individual by an FFL.

The Attorney General has delegated the authority for approval of requests pursuant to these sections to ATF.

The Franklin Armory Reformation is the first firearm produced and sold by an FFL that ATF has classified as a GCA/SBS. Because GCA/SBS firearms have not previously been available in the marketplace, existing federal firearm regulations do not provide a mechanism to process or approve requests from FFLs for approval to transfer a GCA/SBS to a non-licensee pursuant to section 922 (b)(4) or requests from non-licensees to transport a GCA/SBS pursuant to section 922(a)(4).

ATF is currently developing the procedures and forms to address this new type of firearm. Once promulgated, these new procedures and forms will provide the mechanism necessary for FFL holders and owners of GCA/SBS firearms to request the statutorily required approvals. Until such time, you should be aware of the following:

1. An FFL may lawfully sell/transfer a GCA/SBS, such as the Reformation, to the holder of an appropriate FFL (a GCA/SBS cannot be transferred to the holder of a type 06 or type 03 FFL).
2. No mechanism currently exists for ATF to authorize a request from an FFL to transfer a GCA/SBS, such as the Reformation, to a non-licensee. Therefore, until ATF is able to promulgate a procedure for processing and approving such requests, an FFL may not lawfully transfer a Reformation configured as a GCA/SBS to a non-licensee.
3. No mechanism currently exists for an unlicensed individual who possesses a GCA/SBS, such as the Reformation, to submit a request and receive approval to transport the GCA/SBS across state lines. Therefore, until ATF is able to promulgate a procedure for processing and approving such requests, the possessor or owner of a GCA/SBS, such as the Reformation, may not lawfully transport the firearm across state lines.

Any questions pertaining to this Open Letter may be sent to the Firearms Industry Programs Branch at [FIPB@atf.gov](mailto:FIPB@atf.gov) or (202) 648-7190.

— Curtis W. Gilbert

Acting Assistant Director, Enforcement, Programs and Services

What does this mean for shooters? Until this gets sorted out, I think it would be unwise to commit treasure to the purchase of the Franklin Armory Reformation firearm. But I do give Franklin Armory huge credit for creating what seems to be a whole new class of firearms. **GT**

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## COMING UP IN GUN TESTS

● Jerry Barnhart won the 1990 United States Practical Shooting Association National Championship and was the first person to do so with an optical sight. No one has won the Open Division of USPSA since then using iron sights. But can you bet your life on them? Non-magnified red-dot sights are faster and more accurate to use than iron sights. Why else do you think the U.S. military uses them?

We have seen the trend toward red-dot sights on everyday carry (EDC) pistols for some time now. At first, they were big, bulky and somewhat fragile — not suitable to EDC. Now they are smaller, and the newest generation can be mounted directly to the slide. We also have a whole new crop of EDC-type pistols that come from the factory ready to mount the red-dot sights. Do they really improve performance on a small pistol at self-defense distances? Are they durable? We tested four different pistols for you using essentially the same optic to help find out.

We felt that, in order to test the effectiveness of a red-dot sighting system on an EDC, we needed to have pistols for which we could also obtain baseline scores in our drills using iron sights only. We upgraded a **Springfield Armory Hellcat to the OSP model** and added a Shield RMSc red-dot sight. We added the same sight to a **SIG Sauer P365XL** and mounted the supplied Shield SMS to a **Smith & Wesson Performance Center Shield Model 2.0** with a 4-inch barrel. For extra measure, we added in a **Walther PPS M2** with the Shield RMSc sight. Which gun best employs red-dot capability?

● Rimfire revolvers offer a lot of plinking fun. They can also be great training guns to perfect revolver technique without the added cost and recoil of a centerfire revolver. We took a look at three revolvers, all of which have centerfire counterparts. Our test revolvers included a **S&W Model 617-6** built on an L-Frame, a **Ruger LCRx** built on the compact LCR/LCRx frame, and a **Taurus 992 Tracker**, which is built on the Taurus medium-size frame. We were mostly looking for accuracy and ease of use. If we could use it as a small-caliber training gun or a trail gun, those would be pluses. What we found in general were accurate revolvers when shooting in single-action mode, but change to double action, and we soon realized our trigger finger needed to start weight training. We tested at 15 yards with a variety of 22 LR rimfire ammo. With the Taurus we also fired 22 WMR ammo. Who would come out on top?

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