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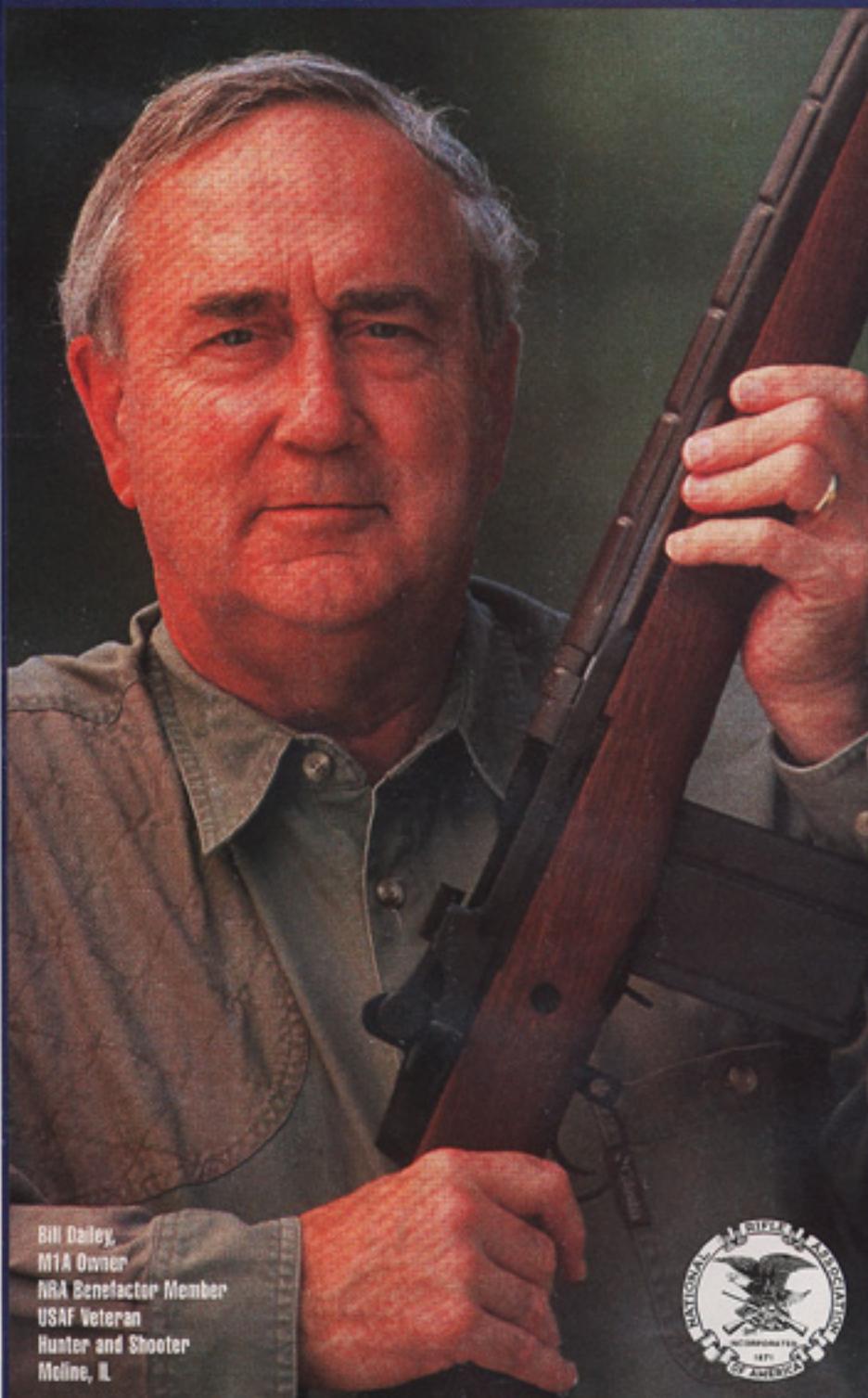
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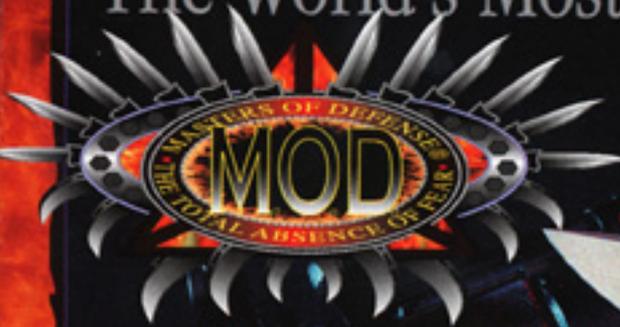
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ON THE COVER:
May, 1970, RVN.
A SEAL up to his knees
in river mud holds his
Stoner Mk 23 Mod 0
high and dry. Photo:
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Virtue of The SWORD

Moral Values And The Warrior Ethic In Modern Society

By James Williams



The sword has defined the warrior for thousands of years. It has defined the power, ethics, duty and self-defense of a class of people that have shaped the face of civilization on this planet. The skill, exercise, mental development and sheer pleasure of using a sword is unique. Hand-to-hand combat with edged weapons is the most demanding of human physical combat. It not only requires the most skill, both physical and mental, but also it develops in the adept abilities that separate the warrior from others. Edged weapon training elevates intuition, reflexes and technique to the highest degree.

For the warrior, the sword represents his duty, his honor and his responsibility. This is, for the most part, no longer a society that even values the warrior or his virtues.

America today is a land where virtue is often looked at askance, where character is not required of those who would seek to lead us. This is a society that enjoys enormous plenty, yet denies its military the

necessary munitions to train to protect this very wealth.

History's Lesson

Why, then, do a significant number of Americans seek training and embrace virtues that seem irrelevant in today's world? Perhaps not all of us have forgotten that less than 60 years ago, the

entire world was involved in a great struggle to determine if a free nation could exist. And most of us know someone who participated in that struggle and by whose efforts we have the gifts of choice and plenty which seem to be taken so lightly.

Everywhere you look in history, this is the case. When strength goes, freedom is sure to follow. Does this mean that it is necessary to cultivate aggression and belligerence? Absolutely not. It does, however, mean that we need to cultivate in ourselves those virtues that lead a free people—courage, honor, veracity, responsibility, perseverance, charity, strength tempered with compassion, discrimination tempered with tolerance.

A Moral Obligation

The reason some people are called to the classical warrior skills and virtues is from a feeling of duty to the whole. We prepare ourselves for those times when we

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may be called upon to protect and defend the others. Any other reason is selfish and ultimately self-destructive.

Being tough and a good fighter is not in and of itself noble. It is the reason, motivation and service that can be provided that ultimately determine our worth.

For me, training in the *kenjutsu* and related military arts prepares me to be a good citizen. It enables me to be of assistance when it is necessary to protect and defend. It teaches me self-discipline, that I may moderate my behavior. I learn perseverance and courage in the face of difficulty, so that I am not easily deterred.

All of this adds up to the courage to live life not just for oneself, but also for others. For me, teaching is giving to others what has been given to me. Like having children, it is the completion of the cycle.

To Protect And Defend

The warrior protects and defends because he realizes the value of others. He knows that they are essential to the society, and in his gift of services, he recognizes and values theirs.

When I hold a door open for a woman or help her carry an object, it is not that I think that she is incapable of doing it for herself. I do it as a mutual recognition of her intrinsic value to society and to me.

This responsibility translates to children as well. When in a public bathroom, keep an eye on any children that may be in there. Even wait an extra moment or two to make sure that they are safely out of the restroom before you leave. It is an unfortunate fact that public restrooms are frequented by pedophiles and potential kidnappers.

Being a father myself, I feel a serious responsibility to all children and hope that other males will help look after mine when I am not present. I cannot count the number of times that I have seen nervous mothers waiting outside of a public bathroom for a young son. Make a point, even tell the mother, that you will keep an eye on the safety of her child in an area in which she cannot go. That is the warrior spirit working in our modern society.

There are other ways in which we can apply the warrior ethic in daily life. For instance, take an extra moment in dark parking lots to make sure that a woman gets into her car safely before leaving yourself. Daily involvement in acts such as these is as much a part of training as time spent in the dojo, and indeed should be the reason for that time spent training.

The Warrior's Role

The role and ability to protect and defend does not give the warrior-protector the right to misuse this strength

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and knowledge. You are not superior; you do not have the right to take advantage of others by means of this strength and ability. If you breach this trust and your sacred responsibility, then you are not a warrior-protector.

All too often in societies over the centuries, this power has been misused to dominate and control others. This is the dark side of power and has no place in the life of the man seeking to live a life of virtue.

In 1984 my good friend Toby Threadgill was faced with a difficult situation. He was awakened late one night by two men who had followed his wife home from her nursing job with the intention of raping her. One held a gun to his head while the other went looking for his wife.

Realizing their intent, and at the risk of his life, Toby managed to disarm the gunman, driving him through a sliding glass door. Then confronted by the knife-wielding accomplice, he managed, although sustaining a serious wound, to disarm and incapacitate him.

Although a likeable and easygoing person, Toby had prepared himself mentally and physically, so that when faced with a dangerous situation, he had both the tools and the courage to use them. When men no longer feel the need to prepare themselves with skills that would enable them to protect and defend the society, when men no longer take responsibility for being male, when a sense of duty is replaced by self-concern and self-indulgence, society loses its greatest strength—the mutual caring and commitment of its citizens for each other.

A Polite Society

Courtesy is an essential element for the warrior. It should be a defining act that can be practiced daily. "To be a samurai is to be polite at all times," said Hojo Nagauji.

Chivalry frames an ideal of heroic character, combining invincible strength, valor, justice, modesty, loyalty, courtesy to equals, compassion for the weak and devotedness to God. These acts of courtesy are first and foremost for yourself. The respect and care that you have for yourself can then extend to other human beings.

Courtesy is an affirmation of the value of life and relationships between human beings. Most virtues today are being sacrificed to every form of vain indulgence. And in that very process, the individual is then pressured to conform to the mores of the current political thinking of the state.

Showing courtesy is indicative of inner strength and security as a male. Courtesy



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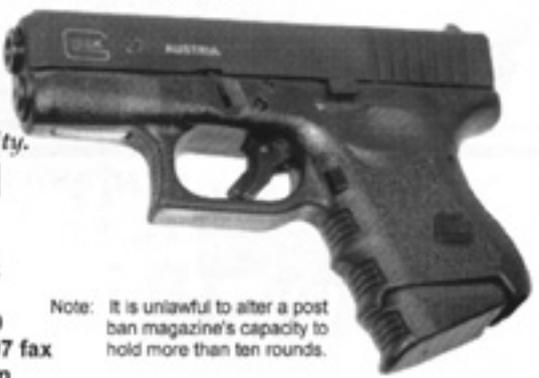
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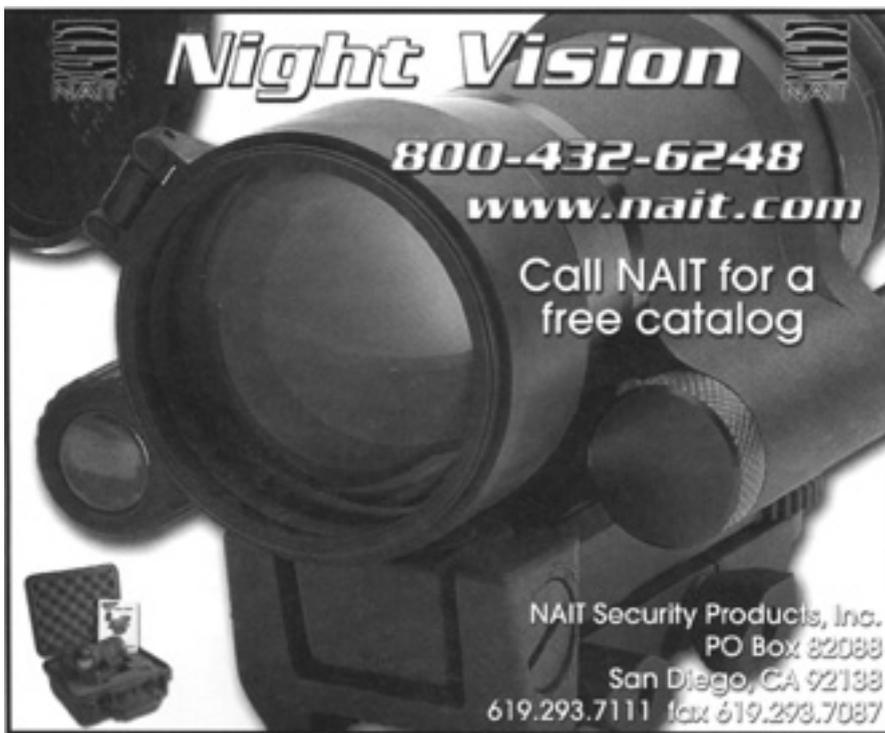
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is the lubricant of a culture, and should be the hallmark of the warrior. No situation is made worse by the application of it, and many situations are made the better for it.

I enjoy showing courtesy towards women in the many ways that are available. This is done not because they could not do these things for themselves, but out of respect for their value in our society. Men are respected and shown courtesy as they earn the right, and this earning is an important part of the value.

Risking oneself for others or for a principle is less and less common. We have become less committed to each other as we have seemingly created a world where we do not seem to need each other to survive.

Being a warrior means being committed to making the ultimate sacrifice.

Virtues such as courage, honor and integrity even carry a stigma in some circles. The very foundations of character are under attack by those who do not understand that without that development of character, there is nothing noble in the human being.

Without courage, compassion and commitment in a personal way, we demean both ourselves and our humanity. It is not the role of everyone to be a warrior; however, for those of us who are called, we should train and study to be the best. There are many guides and heroes to whom we can look as warrior role models, and they are not all male.

I find great inspiration in the life of Mother Teresa. Here is someone who found her life's purpose and lived it steadfastly and, from my standpoint, even gloriously—giving to those too wretched for others to even consider. The courage, love and selfless sense of service that she displayed should serve to inspire us all. If I can give just a fraction of what she gave to others, it would be an accomplishment.

Teaching then becomes a means whereby we can give to others those things that we have learned and been taught by those who have shared with us their knowledge and wisdom. It is not about self-aggrandizement or superiority. It is not about titles, rank, organizations or profit. Most of the time, I feel that I am learning more from my students than they are learning from me. The teacher becomes the student and the student the teacher. Neither can exist without the other.

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"When the choice is between cowardice and violence, I would strongly recommend violence," said Mohandas Gandhi, the most famous pacifist of modern times. We are no longer training our children and our young men to deal with pain, defeat and discomfort with a brave heart and stoic spirit. We seem to think that by removing consequence, we are actually benefiting them.

They do not build true character based on trial and effort involved in overcoming difficulties. When there is no pain, no death, no challenge, no struggle, no adversity, no disappointment, then we will lose the best part of being human.

When we structure a society devoid of every human challenge, there will be no courage, no perseverance, no honor, no compassion, no caring, no commitment; We will have lost the best of what we are because we will have let fear take it from us. We will no longer need each other, and this will be the greatest tragedy.

Being a warrior means being committed to making the ultimate sacrifice and also committing the ultimate act. The gentleman-warrior must take responsibility for his actions and use his power for the good of society and his fellow human beings.

A Time To Kill

As the old samurai saying goes, "To kill when it is right to kill and to die when it is right to die." The role of the warrior as a stabilizing influence in civilized society and a protector of the weak is as old as civilization itself.

Virtue must be taught and practiced, it must be nurtured and passed on to each generation. Freedom must be taught and practiced as well. Virtue and Freedom go hand in hand; not to cherish the one is not to cherish the other. A society that loses the warrior's virtues is the poorer for it and will soon be a society whose freedoms are lost.

The male has a genetic prime directive—a service to life—to protect and defend. In this service, he is historically more expendable than the female and the children. Every man is responsible for defending every woman and every child. When the male no longer assumes this role, when he no longer has the courage or feels the moral responsibility, then that society will no longer be a society where honor and virtue are esteemed.

Neither laws nor government can replace this personal caring and commitment. In the absence of the warrior-protector, the only way that a government can protect a society is to remove the freedom of the people. And the sons and daughters of lions become sheep.



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BULLETS AND BLADES:

TEN TIPS FROM THE MASTERS

By Steve Tarani

Photos By Ichiro Nagata

On the battlefield of old, if a warrior broke his spear in an enemy's body or lost his sword to a crushing blow from a war hammer, it was necessary for him to pick up the nearest weapon and wield it with the same skill and determination as his own. This is not a quaint piece of historical trivia from the days of Alexander The Great; pick-up weapons are necessary in modern combat. In the trenches of World War I, if there wasn't time to reload or your rifle jammed during an "over-the-top" assault, you'd better know how to properly handle a bayonet at close quarters. Or a shovel, or a stick, or your bare hands.

Sergeants-at-arms have discovered and rediscovered throughout history that there are many similarities in handling weapons of war. One must maintain one's balance while wielding a sword just as one does firing a .45 ACP on the move. You need to be agile and ready to move off the line of attack in a bayonet charge just as much as you need to seek cover and concealment in a firefight.

Simple combative skills such as coordination, ambidexterity, flexibility, agility, timing, balance and overall physical fitness are the common threads in all combative training. These elements are the woof and warp, the very fiber of what it takes to be in control of a gunfight, a knife fight and even a fistfight.

These common denominators overlap both the study of ballistic arms and the study of non-ballistic arms. Familiarity with the similarities between different weapons is highly beneficial in actual combat.

There are 10 combative elements which are common to the study of fighting with both gun and knife. According to the master, "He who controls these elements [of combat], controls the fight." Thus, if we hope to gain control of a street fight, then we must first understand the similarities of the most common weapons—the knife and handgun.





Master Tip 1: Toes on Center

The human anatomy is designed such that the points of balance and distribution of center mass are dictated by placement of the feet. When holding a handgun—regardless of your stance—the toes of your lead foot should point directly in the same direction as the muzzle. After all, man is a bipedal hominid, and our very mobility is based

solely upon the precarious placement of our pods on the surface of the earth.

Try this experiment. Assume your normal shooting platform using whatever stance you normally use. Point the lead foot out 45 degrees or more to the outside. Now try pointing them 45 degrees to the inside. Now try pointing them exactly at your intended target. Which feels more

stable? Which places your balance in such a position as to comfortably and effectively place a round on target?

In the case of wielding a knife, your edge and tip should remain forward and poised, in deadly striking distance from a straight line—the shortest distance between two points. The tip should be pointed toward your opponent's center line.

10



Master Tip 2: Knuckles Forward

Your grip, or “contact connection,” to your weapon is perhaps the most important aspect of both firing a handgun and maneuvering a knife.

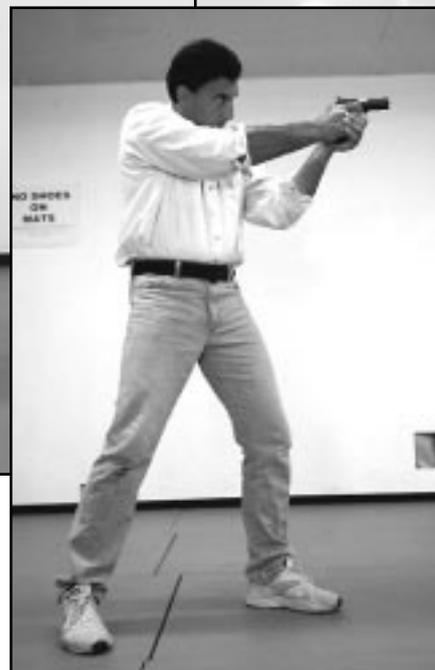
We have three sets of knuckles in our hands. Try this experiment. Take the second set of knuckles and grip a handgun with the knuckles pointing over to the left. Now try moving those same knuckles over to the right. Now place them exactly on center, pointing in the same direction as your target— and your lead toe. What is the difference in feeling? Do you notice a difference in placement?

The same principle applies to your combat folder. Try to place your knuckles on one side or the other of the knife handle. Do you notice any similarities with that of the handgun?

Master Tip 3: Weapon First

The position of the knife point and edge should be exactly between your center line and that of your intended target. Any variation from this laser-straight line throws off your attack by exactly that amount. The concept is to place your weapon first, before any other part of your body. You want a sharp edge between you and harm's way.

Starting a fight with your weapon held behind means that you must bring it to bear all that much farther. There are two important aspects of this element of combat. The first is that you are not placing any other



body parts between the effective edge or muzzle of your weapon. The second aspect is that you don't want to cover your own body in the deployment of either your combat folder or your handgun.



Master Tip 4: Make Distance

Whether he's coming at you with a knife or trying to shoot you with a gun, your ever-present ally is distance. A target that is closer is easier to hit than one farther away. Whether you are

in a knife fight or a gunfight, this principle holds true— it's harder to be hit when you create distance from the threat.

As a trained person, you presumably have greater skills than an unschooled

punk. Use that skill to your best advantage, especially in a gunfight, by making your opponent try to hit you from across the parking lot. You can make that shot easily— can Joe Gang Banger? Probably not.



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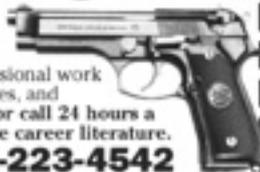
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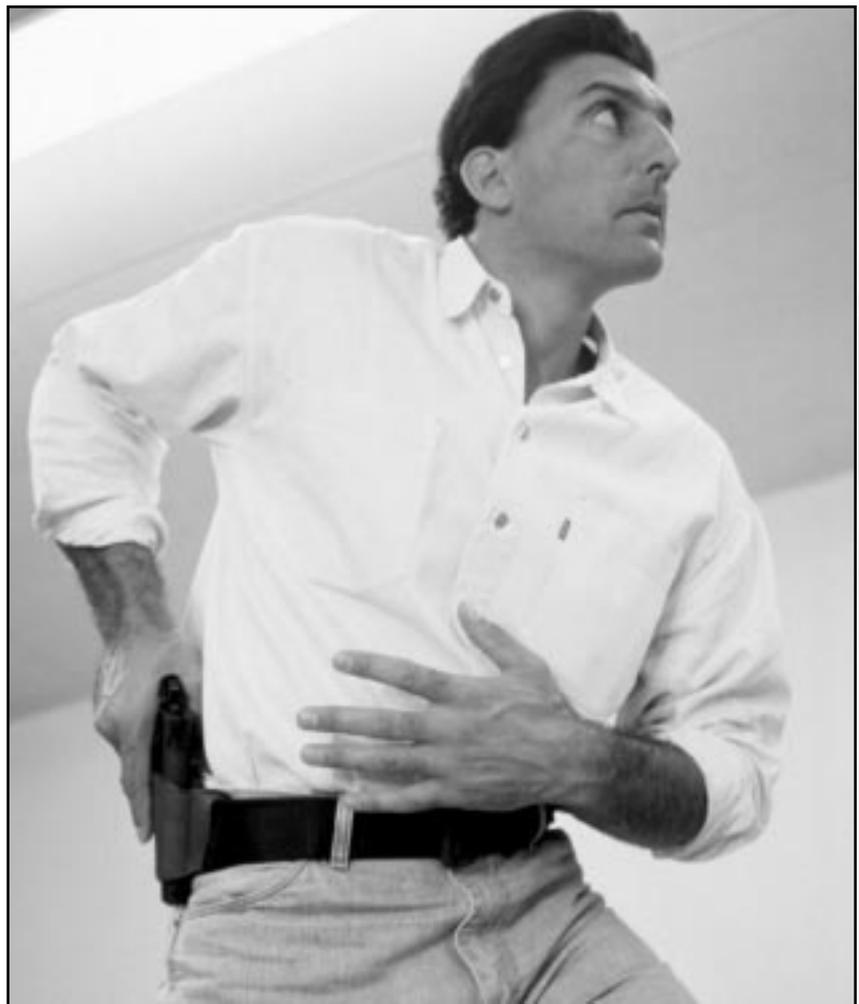
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Master Tip 5: Retract The Support Hand

When first deploying an edged weapon, it is highly recommended by many masters of the knife that you pull back or retract your support hand to prevent both covering your own hand with your knife and leaving a vulnerable target out there for your opponent to hack or shoot at.

During presentation of a handgun, both hands should come to the belly for the same reason— to prevent sweeping your support hand. The handgun must be drawn from its holster with the muzzle placed on target as quickly as possible. In a combat scenario, there is no room for operator error. Proper practice in training equals sharper skills in practical application.





Master Tip 6: Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

In the words of edged weapons master Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite of Leyte, the Philippines, "Repetition is the mother of all skill." Grandmaster Sulite would make his students slash, hack and thrust the same angles of attack over and over again until they started to look smooth, and then he made them do it thousands of times more, just to ensure

that they wired it into their systems through muscle memory.

Professional shooter and law enforcement trainer Ron Avery said, "I put about 1,500 rounds a week downrange to stay tuned; anything less and it doesn't allow me to keep the edge I need when it really counts." Repetition, even at the highest levels, is what makes a pro a pro.



Master Tip 7: Get In, Get Out

Removing an edged weapon from the hands of an attacker is against the advice of all the masters. *Disarms should be accidental or incidental.* Trying to accurately place your hands in the middle of a whirling blender, hoping to grab a razor-sharp blade, may not be the healthiest move for your piano-playing career.

If you're going in for a defensive counter with your own blade, it's necessary to get in, make your cut and get out

as quickly as possible. Never stand toe-to-toe with an attacker and exchange slashes.

The same wisdom applies in the heat of a firefight. Equally matched, would you really want to stay "in the pocket" and exchange high velocity chunks of spiraling lead with your adversary? Negative. The general rule of thumb is: Get in, fire your rounds; and get out as quickly as possible. Remember, if you're in a position to get a hit on him, then he's in a position to get a hit on you. Get in, get out.

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Master Tip 8: Carry And Concealment

The two most important preparatory functions of self-defense with a portable weapon are deciding where to carry it and how to deploy it. These principles apply to both a firearm and an edged weapon.

The ancient masters of edged weapons knew about this, too: Always carry your weapon in the same place. If you need a weapon in a hurry, you want to reach reflexively for it. Imagine getting into your car in the morning, and every day someone changes the position of your brake, clutch and gas pedal. Sure, you'd figure it out after a while, but in an emergency, you'd better know where the brake is! Once you decide on a carry position that fits your personal profile, don't change it!



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Master Tip 9: Consistent Deployment

Similar to the need for a consistent method of carry, deployment should also be practiced consistently. Carry and deployment are related in that you should be proficient at deploying your weapon in the exact same manner, every time, from the exact same carry position.

It is the recommendation of the masters that you decide on one specific method of edged-weapon deployment and come to master that particular method until it's hardwired into your system. For the handgun, pick a carry method and practice dry-drawing until your hands are sore and your shoulders ache. Then practice some more.



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Master Tip 10: Sam Colt's Rule

In a knife fight, it is advantageous to put something between you and your opponent— an obstacle of some sort, like a trash-can lid, a briefcase, a garbage bag or even just plain distance. This can equalize your combative situation, since your opponent probably already has surprise on his side.

In a gunfight, this would be compared to seeking cover and concealment. Cover is something that would actually be able to stop a bullet, such as a thick brick wall or a couple of parked cars. Concealment might or might not stop a bullet, but hiding yourself at least gives you a bit more advantage in that your opponent will have to find you to shoot at you. 

Steve Tarani teaches both *Close Quarters Tactics* and *Edged Weapons* courses at *Gunsite* as well as POST-certified courses for law enforcement agencies. He can be reached via www.edgedefense.com or by calling (949) 252-1962 for scheduling or more information.



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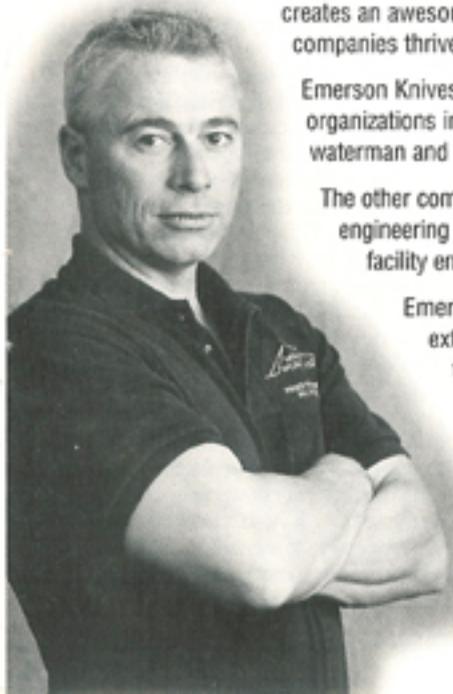
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A SEAL crouches at the side of a jungle trail, at right, his Stoner 63A at the ready. Note the 150 round drum mag and crossed 5.56mm ammo belts over his chest. He's also carrying a K-Bar knife and an M26 frag grenade. The 63A fed from the left side and was prone to "spin back" jams. It was replaced with the right-side feeding Mk 23.

NAVY SEAL WEAPONS IN VIETNAM



Text By Robert Bruce

Technical Advice By Kevin Dockery
Studio Photos By David Poleski, PPI
Historical Photos From Naval Historical Center

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The SEALs relied on the Stoner light machinegun more than any other weapon in 'Nam.

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The SEALs used a variety of grenade launchers to augment their rifles and machineguns.





The Stoner light machinegun (LMG) was carried and fired in numerous actions against the Viet Cong by SEALs whose lives depended not only on their stealth, skill and courage, but also on the deadly effectiveness of their weaponry. It is amazing that a weapon fielded in such small numbers would have developed such a tremendous reputation in combat. No more than a half dozen of Eugene Stoner's LMGs were in combat during any given 24 hour period of America's direct involvement in the Vietnam War, but they performed so well that the elite Navy SEAL teams considered them indispensable.

Indeed, the very image of the dreaded green-faced frogmen is forever linked to the unmistakable profile of their belt-fed Stoner guns. Just as the documented effectiveness of Naval Special Operations was far out of proportion to their small numbers, so too grew the mystique of the Stoner guns they carried.

Stoner "Commando"

Adding to the six main configurations of the modular Stoner Weapons System, the Mark 23 Mod 0 Stoner is particularly noteworthy— a specially modified version of the 63A1 "Commando" LMG built for the SEAL Teams. Introduced around 1969, about six years after arrival of the first SEAL Team in Vietnam, it was based on lessons learned carrying previous Stoners in countless patrols and firefights in the harshly demanding climate and terrain of the Mekong River delta region.

Although having in common the major parts and assemblies of factory standard 63 series LMGs, the SEAL's Mk 23 version is easily identified by its short 15.7" barrel, which is chopped off just forward of the front sight/gas block and fluted with lengthwise cuts. It also has a distinctive "window pane" bolt swapping tool in its black polycarbonate buttstock, and bottom-mounted rectangular ammo box holder with feeding into the right side of the receiver.

The cocking handle has been moved from the side to underneath the forearm and usually field modified with an extension for more positive gripping. Not so easily noticed, but perhaps just as important, are some other inside and outside improvements to 63 series guns made by Cadillac Gage engineers reacting to the harshly candid direct feedback from the Marines who first used them in peacetime trials and combat operations.

THE STONER AGE

While the shorter barrel was both a bit lighter and certainly handier in dense jungle movement, its gas system was prone to carbon clogging. This was fixed by switching the gas tube from ordnance steel to stainless, cutting a relief groove inside, and providing a three-position regulator. This last feature not only allowed the gunner to immediately change settings to allow more gas through when the gun began to fire sluggishly, but also it provided a variable rate of fire in clean guns from 700 rmp on low to 1,000 rpm on high.

Previous versions had a three-position selector switch, safe, semi and auto. Fire-fight experience showed the need for simplification by adding a sheet metal safety tab that locks the bolt when it swings inside the trigger guard. This allowed the gunner to safely handle and carry his weapon on patrol, then flick the safety tab forward and off with the trigger finger when contact was imminent.

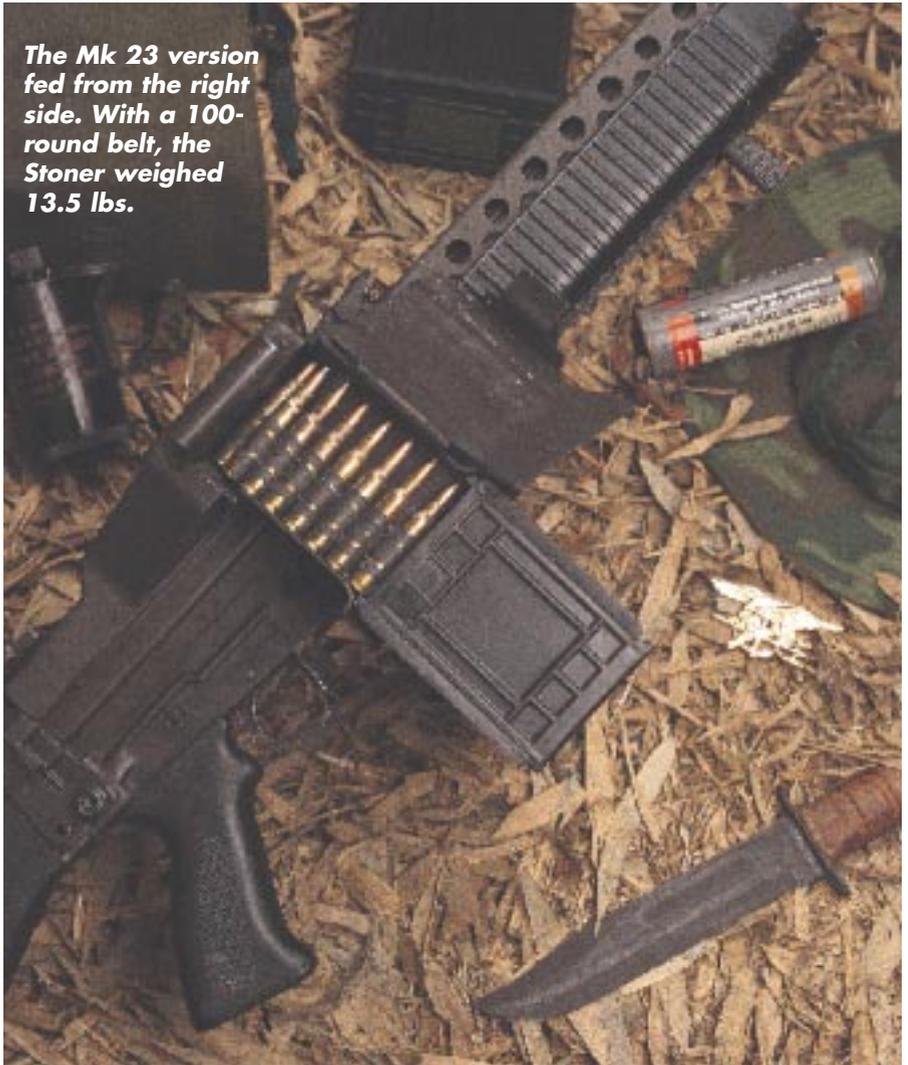
Since 63A and Mk 23 belt-fed guns fire in full-auto only, the new two-position selector switch was irrelevant.

The later Stoners featured an improved feeding system for more positive lifting of long and heavy belts of ammo, plus a spring-loaded cam roller that allowed the top cover to be closed regardless of the bolt's position, avoiding damage to the belt feed camming track.

But most importantly, these later versions now routed the belt into the right side of the gun with ejection to the left and forward. This was found necessary to correct an infrequent, but very serious, stoppage called "spin back." Although the receiver module used in common with magazine-fed Stoner assault rifles is necessarily inverted on belt-fed guns, the 63 and 63A series LMGs were made to eject empty cases out of the right side.

This arrangement is common to virtually all other U.S. machineguns. Unfortunately, for some reason on the Stoner, this would sometimes cause an ejecting case to spin back into the receiver instead of flying clear. The resulting jam was particularly nasty and hard to fix—especially in the middle of a firefight.

The Mk 23 version fed from the right side. With a 100-round belt, the Stoner weighed 13.5 lbs.



A quick and easy fix was apparently impossible and it became necessary to extensively modify the top cover and other parts for right-hand feed and left-side ejection. This must have been a very difficult choice because most of the existing high-capacity feed drums fielded by the Cadillac Gage factory, the Navy's China Lake facility, and even in-country modifications, were based on the original left-side feed.

Although most old and new guns continued to serve side-by-side in Vietnam, available information indicates that the right-feed Mk 23 version

soon proved superior in operational reliability and effectiveness.

Runaway Gun

There is a well-known story of a tragically fatal accident with a runaway Stoner LMG that is recounted by Lt. Cdr. Michael Walsh in the excellent video *The Stoner Machine Gun* and confirmed by Frank Toms, who was wounded in the same incident. Both were members of SEAL Team One in Vietnam.

They tell of how a fellow SEAL, Walter Pope, was killed by his own Stoner when the takedown pin worked its way out,



This famous photo of a SEAL squad (above) about to embark on a mission shows the full regalia of their weaponry. Note the two RVN scouts in the foreground attached to the squad.



The Stoner came in a variety of versions, from tripod mounted to grenadier.

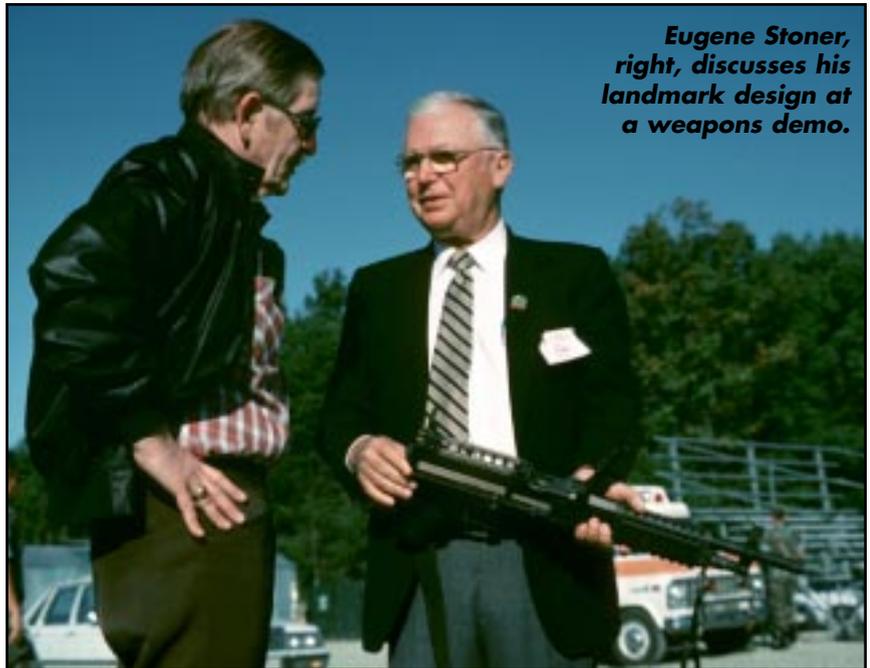


allowing the receiver halves to separate. With nothing to keep the cocked bolt from running forward, the weapon began firing uncontrollably, hitting Pope with multiple rounds.

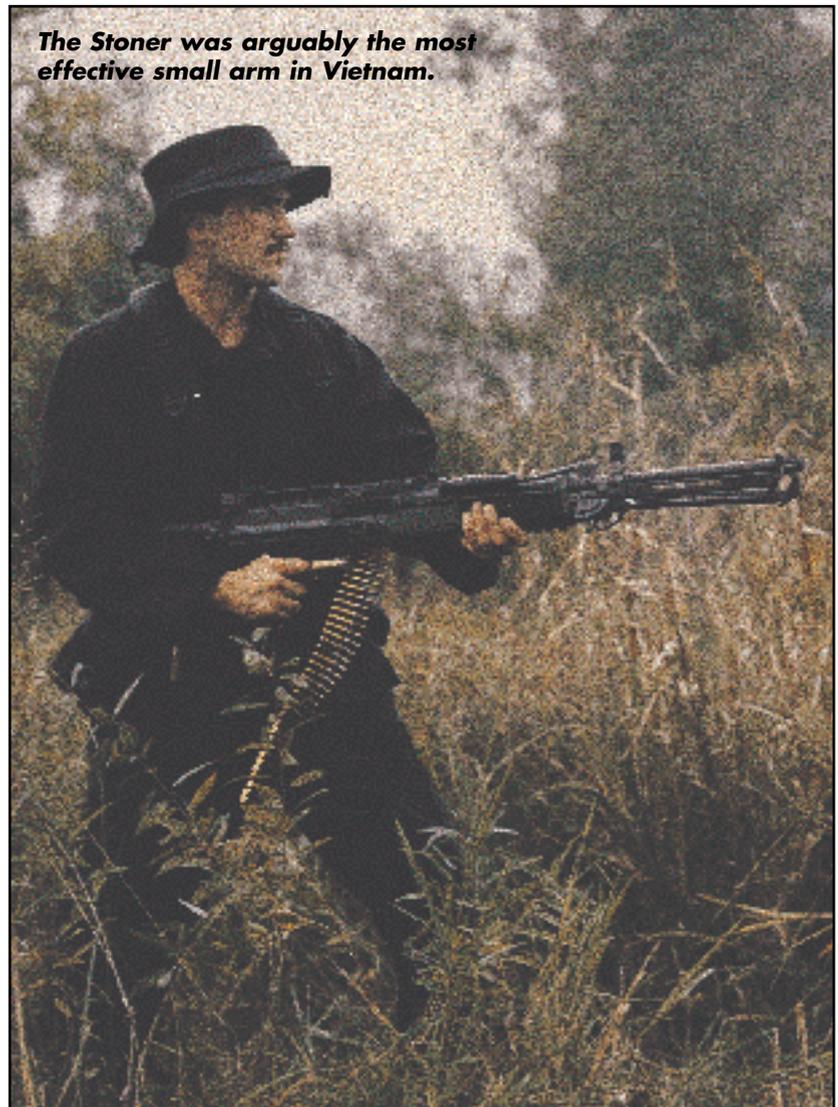
This fault was soon fixed by fitting all belt-fed Stoners with a new positive-locking takedown pin with the grisly, but appropriate, nickname “dead man pin.”

Combat Effectiveness

These important changes further enhanced what was already a unique and extraordinarily effective weapon well-suited to SEAL operations in Vietnam. The heart of the Stoner is the little 5.56mm cartridge, also used in the M16 rifle. This ammunition is quite a bit smaller, lighter



Eugene Stoner, right, discusses his landmark design at a weapons demo.



The Stoner was arguably the most effective small arm in Vietnam.

and has less recoil than the NATO standard 7.62mm, yet its high-velocity 55 gr. bullet is demonstrably lethal.

Stoner was able to take maximum advantage of the .223's low recoil by feeding and launching it from a light and compact package. Often described as having an action that is uncannily smooth and controllable in full-auto fire, the 63 series weapons featured Stoner's trademark rotary locking bolt, positively powered by a conventional gas piston system and moving on a straight line axis.

The smaller cartridge and lighter machinegun also meant that the gunner could carry substantially more ammo at the same weight penalty of a 7.62mm M60. Two of these hard-hitting but



This SEAL has a drum-fed Stoner and a rocket tube. The tiger stripe cammies match the vegetation perfectly.

slower-firing “pigs” were usually carried by each SEAL squad.

Even with a shortened barrel and stripped to its bare essentials, the M60 still weighed a hefty 19 lbs. More ammo, lighter weight, better controllability and a higher cyclic rate also supported the littler gun’s primary mission as a critical instrument of fire superiority immediately upon enemy contact.

Even at its lowest gas setting of about 700 rpm, the Stoner was capable of firing

a 100 round belt in under 8.5 seconds! Reloading was fast and simple, and the almost continuous full-auto fire from three Stoners, the usual number carried in a SEAL squad, could most times be counted on to quickly overwhelm even the most determined enemy force.

Sadly, and for seemingly inexplicable reasons, the Cadillac Gage Stoner 63 and improved 63A and 63A1 systems never found widespread acceptance in military

circles. Less than 4,000 of all variants were ever made.

Eugene Stoner went on to become a principal player in ARES, Inc. where he further refined the 63 into an even simpler and more capable weapon. Despite this and some continuing efforts by Knight’s Armament of Vero Beach, Fla., the Stoner modular weapons system has never achieved the commercial success it so richly deserved.

The role pioneered by the Stoner 63 series is filled today in American military service and among many allied nations by the very capable Belgian-designed 5.56mm FN MINIMI, widely known as the M249 Squad Automatic Weapon. 

Special thanks to Mark Wertheimer, Small Arms Collection curator, for his extraordinary patience, good humor and hospitality in making available a Mk 23 Stoner and other rare and unusual examples of Vietnam-period Navy Special Operations weaponry.

Thanks also to Kevin Dockery, gunsmith and SEAL historian, for applying his considerable expertise to ensuring the technical accuracy of this series.

*Finally, we appreciate Dan Shea, publisher of **Small Arms Review**, for his excellent series of articles documenting the history and evolution of Eugene Stoner’s remarkable firearms.*

A SEAL squad performs the very important ritual of function-firing their weapons before an operation. A close examination reveals their weapons include (L to R) a Stoner LMG, an M79 grenade launcher, an M16, another Stoner, another M16 and, in the foreground, an operator with a captured AK-47. The Stoner man in the center is wearing a lightweight rucksack frame with three “universal” ammo pouches on top of what appears to be his flotation vest.





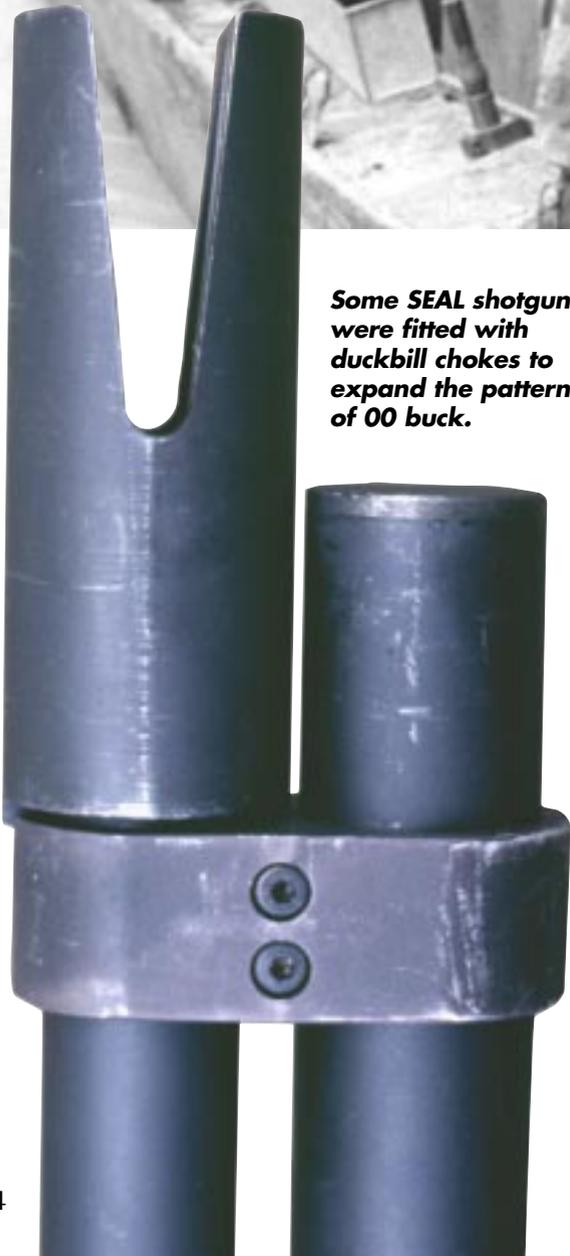
Two representative versions of the Stoner 63A family: a Mk 23 Mod O (top) and a 63A Carbine. Both weapons are assembled from a common receiver group using specialized modules that are interchangeable. The belt-fed Mk 23 was the last and most refined of the Stoners fielded in Vietnam.



A late war photo reveals important weapons including a Colt XM-177E2 with an XM-148 grenade launcher. Wouldn't you know it, the smallest guy is packing the Stoner!



Some SEAL shotguns were fitted with duckbill chokes to expand the pattern of 00 buck.



The SEAL shotgun came with a rifle-type front sight.

COMBAT SCATTERGUNS

The meat-mangling effect of a scattergun loaded with buckshot is no secret. The 12 gauge pump action repeater has been in U.S. military service since clearing trenches became a necessity in World War I. Marine combat experience in the jungles of World War II unmistakably proved the utility of the military shotgun for close range encounters where silence is not the primary factor. It wasn't long after the first Navy SEALs deployed to Vietnam that this lesson was re-learned.

The Ithaca Model 37 was a standard-issue shotgun in the Navy in the 1960s, used mostly by boarding parties and for in-port ship security. When the newly-commissioned SEAL Teams got a bunch of the guns, one of the first things they did was to strip off the visually impressive, but practically useless barrel shroud and bayonet lug. This resulted in a handy, four-plus-one slide action 12 gauge, weighing merely 6.4 lbs. and measuring just under 40", a particularly efficient package.

The downward ejection of the gun gave

it a further advantage over competing designs. With no ejection port on the side to serve as a second entry point for the ever-present crud, rain and mud, it was particularly resistant to jamming.

Just as their many predecessors had discovered, the SEALs found the awe-inspiring roar of a 12 gauge shotgun in the hands of a well-trained pointman to be just the ticket when ambushed. Much practice was devoted to the technique of furiously pumping the slide mechanism for ultra-fast return fire in the critical first seconds.

But, there is always room for improvement and gun's limited ammo capacity was one obvious candidate. The Navy's China Lake gun gurus went to work and by the end of 1967 began shipping over a modification kit that extended the gun's tubular magazine to hold three more rounds. This gave the Model 37 a grand total of eight on board.

Box Magazines

Still, the Ithaca's underbarrel tubular magazine took far too long to reload when





A shotgun-toting SEAL emerges from a STAB (SEAL Team Assault Boat) while his squad prepares for another mission. The point man often carried a shotgun to lay down a blanket of lead in an ambush.

things were hot and heavy. A detachable magazine made sense and early in 1970, according to Thomas Swearingen in his essential reference book *The World's Fighting Shotguns*, Navy firearms engineer Carroll Childers put his considerable talents to this task at the Naval Surface Weapons Center.

A prominent Science Advisor who spent several months in the war zone in 1968 and again in '69 as part of what is sometimes called the Vietnam Laboratory Assistance Program, Childers had already provided the SEALs with a reliable 50

round mag for their M16 rifles. Building on this successful innovation, he soon produced a pair of cleverly designed aluminum boxes reliably feeding 10 or 20 rounds, staggered in two rows for compactness. This was no small feat with the big, heavy, fully rimmed shells that jostled around under the punishing recoil of 12 gauge loads.

Since the Navy's standard issue Ithaca loaded and ejected from the same hole under the receiver, this gun wasn't the ideal candidate for conversion to mag feed. Fortunately, the Remington 870 was mechani-

cally suited, already in the Marine Corps inventory, and well liked by Force Recon units that sometimes operated with SEALs.

Childers and his team produced a fairly simple and easily applied modification kit for the 870 that performed well in testing and was all set for production when the word came down that the U.S. was pulling out of Vietnam. But more on that later.

Pellets and Chokes

Another characteristic needing improvement was in patterning, the distribution of multiple lead balls at varying distances from the muzzle. There are at least two main components to this—pellets and chokes—and the ideal combination sparks a never-ending debate among shot-gunners. While the big double-ought round with its nine .33 caliber balls remains even today a combat-proven military standard, it is noted in contemporary accounts that most SEAL shotgunners preferred smaller #4 buckshot.

Perhaps puzzling to the casual student of wound ballistics, this should not be hard to understand when properly considered. Although the projectiles in the #4 round are only .24 caliber, their combined weight in the shell is the same as that of the nine pellet 00 buckshot, and there are 27 of them flying through the air instead of nine. Keeping in mind that the incapacitating effect of gunshots increases markedly with



multiple hits, the #4 shot is still large and heavy enough so that relatively few need to find the mark to cause sufficient damage to immobilize or kill.

This plethora of flying lead would be of only marginal utility if not efficiently delivered to the central mass of a man-sized target at realistic combat ranges, and this is where chokes come in. Any number of chokes—most simply defined as muzzle diameter restrictors—have been developed over the decades for sporting and military applications. But the SEALs wanted something quite different. Give us something, they asked, that will increase hit probability and thus pointman survival in a close range jungle ambush.

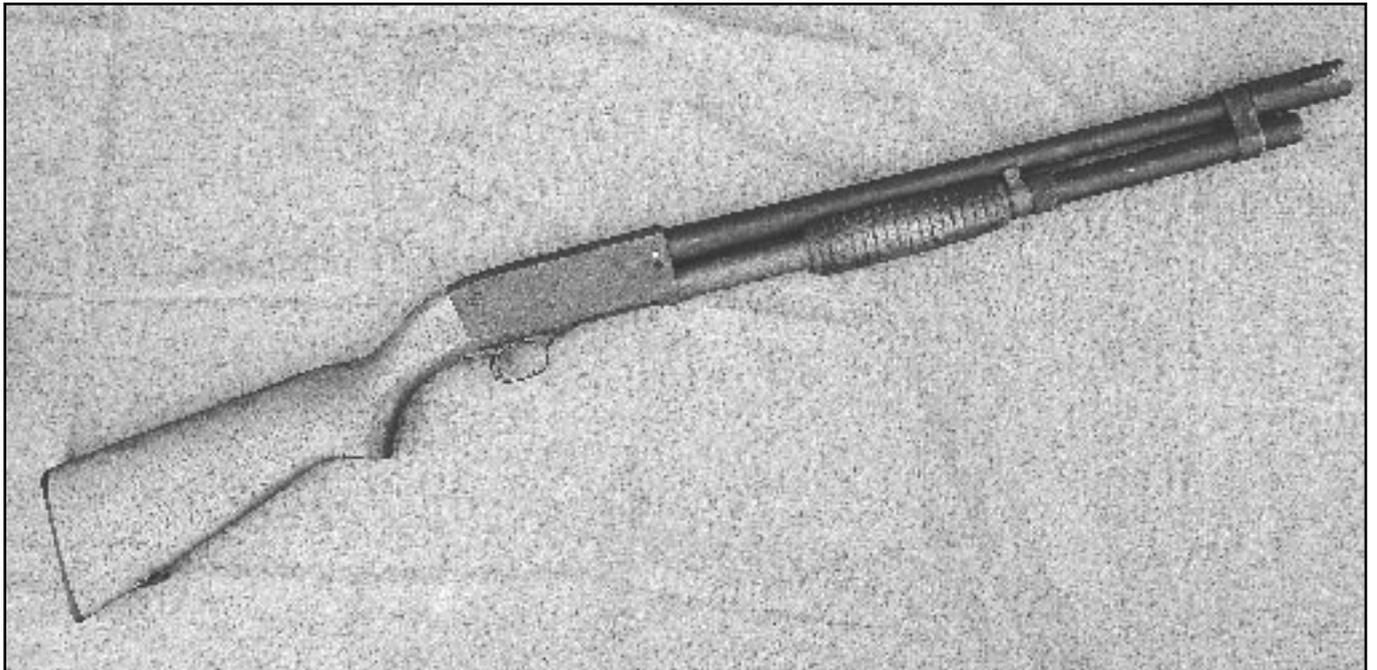
Initial experiments at Frankford Arsenal in the mid-'60s pointed to ordnance engineer Charles Greenwood's duckbill choke as a promising avenue for further development. When properly oriented on the muzzle, this V-shaped device restricts the top and bottom of the shot pattern so that a larger number of pellets fly in a horizontal plane, increasing hit probability against closely-grouped enemies or those running parallel to the gunner.

However, SEAL combat experience with



Magazine extension tubes (below) increased the ammo payload. Semiauto shotguns (above) were relatively rare.





duckbill-equipped Model 37s and carefully observed formal testing would eventually demonstrate that the concept was not as practical as hoped except at relatively close range. According to Swearingen, controlled tests showed the duckbill would consistently put only a few pellets from a #4 shot anywhere in a man-sized target placed 40 meters away. In contrast, a traditional cylinder choke could be counted on to deliver on target at least 60 percent of the balls; that's 16 hits per shot.

This pattern density is all the more crucial when shooting through dense jungle vegetation and the duckbill's popularity faded away along with its novelty value.

Full Auto Follies

As good as the Model 37 became— and the box mag modified 870 could have been— the ageless concept of “more is better” spurred other areas of experimentation with a series of noteworthy developments in rapid fire shot throwers. The Remington 7188, first to be fielded by the SEALs, was a full-auto jackhammer based on this great American gunmaker's respected

Model 1100 semiauto hunting gun. Although boasting a cyclic rate of about seven rounds per second, the gas operated 7188 reportedly was difficult to control as well as prone to malfunction from environmental factors.

Meanwhile, back at the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Dahlgren, Va., magazine master, gun enthusiast and engineer Carroll Childers had been hard at work on a completely different full-auto shotgun. Colorfully acronymed SOW for Special Operations Weapon, it was to be no mere conversion of an existing gun. Childers knew he had to come up with something completely different to meet the demanding standards of Marine Force Recon and Navy SEALs.

Most importantly, the gun would have to be a light and compact package that would reliably feed and controllably fire not only various military standard 12 gauge shells, but also to launch a new family of special purpose munitions. Although of the same caliber, these SPMs had necessarily longer cases and widely varying recoil impulses.

A developmental SOW— called at the

time the MIWS for Multipurpose Individual Weapon System— is preserved among many other one-of-a-kind artifacts in the Naval Historical Center's collection. The chunky and stubby slab sided aluminum and steel first generation prototype is fed from the top using one of the multi-round box mags Childers developed for the 870 shotgun.

This one is apparently intended for hip fire only, featuring two pistol grips with heavily worn and deeply scratched olive drab paint giving much evidence of rough use during its short, but fascinating life as a test subject.

Development of the Childers SOW and its remarkable family of 12 gauge ammo had come tantalizingly close to warranting a full-scale program when Pentagon bureaucrats pulled the plug on small arms R&D. Cowardly American politicians ordered a withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam. At the same time, the Democrat-controlled Congress clearly showed its contempt for the American military by deeply slashing the defense budget.



Both the SOW (Special Operations Weapon) and its magazine-fed Remington 870 predecessor (bottom) were products of mechanical wizard Carroll Childers, an engineer at the Naval Special Weapons Center. The 870 mod kit provided SEAL shotgunners with a quick-change magazine holding 20 rounds. The SOW was full-auto.



The S&W Model 76 silenced submachinegun offered the SEALs some serious suppressed firepower.

When the Navy sent its seaborne special operations forces for a job that had to be done at eye-ball-to-eyeball range, they traded their Stoners and Thumpers for a silenced weapon. Experience in World War II with silenced weapons in the hands of OSS (Office of Strategic Services) agents clearly showed the utility of these quiet killers. Several thousand silencer-equipped .22 LR semiauto High Standard pistols had been fielded by 1945 and many of these were still around for the Vietnam war.

But, the little rimfire cartridge was not an ideal manstopper, and both the CIA, successor to the OSS, and the Navy Special Operations community were actively searching for something better. One handy and very practical solution was a simple conversion kit for the Walther P-38, an excellent double-action 9mm semiauto that could be easily had on the surplus market.

Essentially a spare barrel with muzzle threads and a throwaway suppressor of prewar design, the "Sound Moderator, Pistol, Walther" fired a heavier-than-normal projectile for subsonic flight. Most importantly, this 9mm bullet gave the suppressed rig a more substantial punch than the old .22 pistol, with little increase in sound signature.

Further experimentation with both silencer design and launching platforms eventually led to a home-grown combination. The critical part of the weapon system, the suppressor or "can," was classified by the Navy as the Mark 3 Mod 0. It was developed initially on locked-frame P38 pistols.

It consists of a lightweight aluminum cylinder with an easily replaced insert containing several soft plastic discs. The insert is held in place with a coil spring that fits neatly inside the short expansion chamber at the barrel end.



SILENT KILLERS

This type is generally known as a “wipe device,” the plastic discs literally wiping against the sides of the passing bullet while slowing the accompanying propellant gas to subsonic level. Its advantages include simplicity, low cost and throwaway maintenance with quick replacement in the field.

Apparently unsatisfied with the performance of the CIA-issue subsonic ammo, the Navy carried out some experimentation that culminated in the “Cartridge, Mark 144, Mod.” While maintaining the original 158 gr. projectile’s weight and subsonic flight, the new cartridge’s propellant load was cleverly contrived so that the round’s recoil impulse matched that of standard velocity military ball ammo. This provided reliable function in a wide range of pistols and submachineguns with or without suppressors.

However, apparently bowing to the Geneva/Hague treaties on “Rules of Land Warfare,” the bullet was fully jacketed, with terminal effects much less efficient than virtually any softnose type.

Hush Puppy

The new ammo and suppressor teamed up with a pistol based on the 9mm Smith & Wesson Model 39 hastily modified by Charlie Lewis at the Naval Ordnance Laboratory, White Oak, Md. Building on experience with the Mark 3 suppressor on the P-38, the S&W got a stronger slide lock that pivots in the center and engages on both sides of the frame like an H-shaped see-saw.

This feature allows the operating slide to be immobilized, eliminating the mechanical noise generated during recoil, extraction and ejection. After each shot, the operator uses the thumb of his gripping hand to disengage the slide lock then cycles the action just as in cocking.

Although disengaging the locking piece provided semiauto function, this was less than fully reliable, despite the improved subsonic ammo. Regular ball was not only too loud, but also it sharply reduced the life of the suppressor insert.



Cocked-and-locked carry for immediate use was made possible by elimination of the sear release lever, so the hammer wouldn’t drop when the thumb safety was engaged. Finally, a taller front sight blade and an adjustable match rear sight were installed to provide clear line-of-aim over the suppressor can.

While there is some conflict in various

sources over the proper nomenclature for the final version of this pistol and can, SEAL weapons authority Kevin Dockery lists the key parts as “Pistol, Mark 22 Mod 0” with “9mm Pistol Noise Suppressor Mark 3 Mod.”

When issued together, the rig is officially identified by the Navy supply system as the “9mm Pistol and Sup-



pressor Kit Mark 23.”

When the SEAL Team needs a replacement insert for the Mk 3 suppressor after putting about 24 rounds through it, the thing to order is the “Accessory Kit Mark 26 Mod 0.”

This combo makes up the infamous Hush Puppy, purportedly the favorite assassination weapon of the CIA-sponsored Phoenix Program. Rebutting the sometimes lurid and often highly exaggerated stories from critics of SPECOPS in Vietnam, a number of SEAL operators have written in their postwar accounts that they rarely used the suppressed pistol against human targets. Instead, it most often proved effective in neutralizing the ever-present dogs and even geese that served interchangeably as both perimeter guards and food in VC camps and villages.

The first run of 10 kits were hand-carried to Vietnam in 1969 by Carroll Childers, an advisor with the Navy Science Assistance Program, and issued on the basis of four sets each to SEAL Teams One and Two. Also, one went to USMC First Force Recon at DaNang and the last to MACSOG I Corps.

Multiple Hits

Given the disappointing terminal effect of the “improved” 9mm subsonic ammo, coupled with the single-shot nature of the Hush Puppy pistol, it isn’t surprising that some SEALs tended to prefer suppressed submachineguns for the task. These rapid-fire weapons could put several slugs into the enemy with a single squeeze of the trigger, giving a skilled gunner a much better chance of success and survival when multiple targets were presenting themselves.

One of these was another World War II OSS weapon, a hard-hitting .45 caliber silent subgun consisting of an ordinary M3 “Grease Gun” fitted with a special barrel inside a Bell Labs suppressor.

This was the first suppressed weapon formally issued to the SEALs in 1962. Unfortunately, this rig was heavy and somewhat awkward, leaving the door open to others chambered for 9mm ammo. Prominent among new generation submachineguns was a simple and hardy weapon usually called the Swedish K.

This rugged 9mm subgun was issued to the teams in both standard and suppressed versions, the latter having a Bell Labs-style silencer built around its screw-on barrel and streamlined to look like an extension of the receiver. Although said to have been well-liked in standard form, the quiet version was not all that quiet and, at 12 lbs., was

almost a full pound heavier than the more powerful .45 caliber Grease Gun.

Soon after news pictures of SEALs carrying Swedish K subs in combat in Vietnam began to appear around the world, the pacifist and officially neutral country of Sweden cut off supply. This was one factor leading the American firm of Smith & Wesson to begin producing a submachine gun obviously based on the stamped and welded Carl Gustaf M45 with its easily unscrewed barrel.

Although first pre-production models of the S&W M76 had been in SEAL hands since 1967, the Navy didn't get around to classifying it until 1970 as the "Mark 24 Mod 0." The Navy Mk 24 submachinegun features a stainless steel suppressor with an internal design that eliminates operator maintenance, including the need for periodic replacement of wipes.

Just as importantly, holes drilled in the barrel forward of the chamber vent sufficient propellant gas to slow standard velocity 9mm ammo to subsonic speed—eliminating both ballistic "crack" and the need for special ammo. Tipping the scales at about 9½ lbs. fully loaded with 36 rounds and suppressor attached, the M76/Mk 24 is significantly lighter than the Swedish K. Also, its cyclic rate is faster; it has both semi- and full-auto selector settings, and the front sight is mounted to the receiver tube, so there was no need for radical rezeroing when the barrel was changed.

While it is said to have proven very reliable in combat and was well-liked by SEALs, the gun did not find much of a market elsewhere, and S&W dropped production in 1976 after about 6,000 had been made. There are, of course, countless other remarkable weapons both ordinary and exotic that served at one time or another in the hands of SEALs in Vietnam. So, even in this multi-part special feature, the space necessary to do justice to this fascinating story is not practical in magazine format. For those whose interest has been aroused, I believe the best single source for information on both famous and obscure weapons of the Navy's UDT and SEALs is Kevin Dockery's *Special War, Special Weapons*. First published in 1996, this invaluable book has been recently reprinted and will soon be joined by a second in the series, concentrating on such near-legendary arms as the Stoner light machinegun, various grenade launchers and explosives. Contact your bookseller or The Emperor's Press, Dept GCA, 5744 West Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL 60634.



The influence of the Swedish K submachinegun (bottom) on the configuration and internal design of the S&W Model 76 is quite obvious. The Swedish gun has a standard barrel inside a jacket perforated for air cooling. The S&W is fitted with a matte black stainless steel suppressor. While both can be easily fitted with suppressors by simply unscrewing the barrel collar, the S&W had both its sights on the receiver, so it didn't need to be re-zeroed. The S&W was exceptionally well-liked by the SEALs because it was reliable and easy to maintain.



Based on a Smith & Wesson Model 39, the Navy's version was called the Mk 22. The silencer was the Mk 3. When you fit the Mk 3 on the Mk 22, you get a Mk 23 Mod 0. Got it? Shown with it is a very rare Mk 26 Accessory Kit containing 24 rounds of subsonic 9mm and a spare suppressor insert. The nonmagnetic scuba knife is covered in detail on the next page.

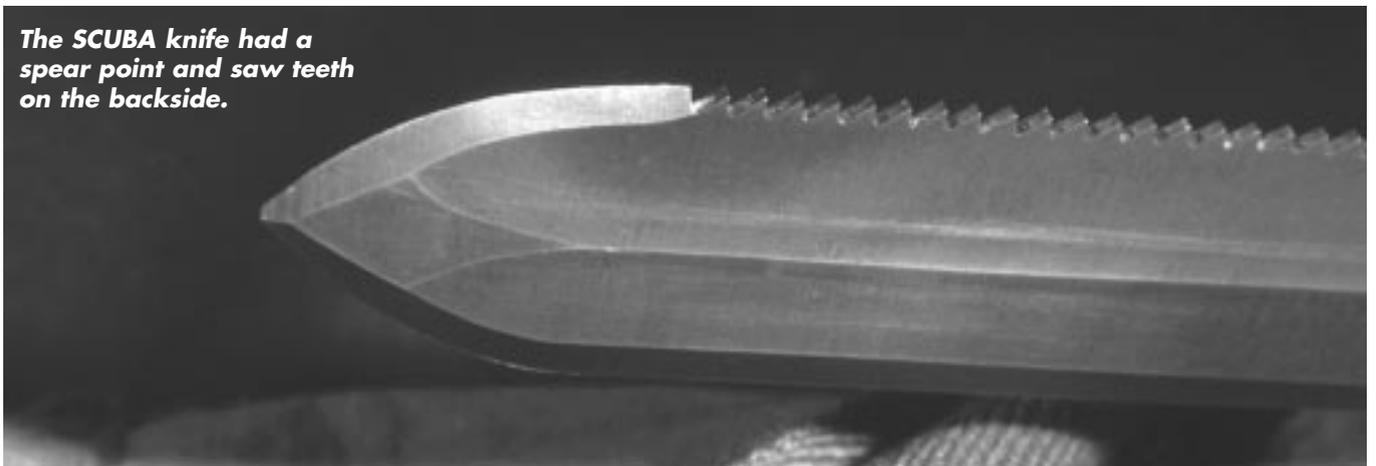


Made of copper-chromium-tungsten-nickel alloy, the SCUBA knife was nonmagnetic. Only 1,100 were made from '61 to '62, making it a rare knife indeed.



The good ole K-BAR was also popular with SEALs.

The SCUBA knife had a spear point and saw teeth on the backside.



SEAL KNIVES



The SCUBA Swimmers Knife measured 12" and weighed 1 lb.

The fetish for knives is particularly understandable among special operations types who are often living literally "on the edge." At extremely close range and in skilled hands, a knife is an almost foolproof weapon for one-on-one combat that can always be counted on to work and makes no noise of its own.

The real trick, according to guys who have experience in these primal encounters, is to keep the target from making noise before he dies.

Not surprisingly, SEALs got a lot of training in hand-to-hand combat with an emphasis on knife fighting and sentry removal. Perhaps the best known and most universally appreciated knife in U.S. military history is the Ka-bar, a Bowie-sized fistful of steel and leather originally issued to the Marine Corps in World War II and still in regular service.

Issued by the Navy with gray plastic scabbard as the Mark 2, the Ka-bar is well suited for the widest range of tasks from can-opening and brush-clearing to throat-slitting and everything else in between.

SEALs are known to have carried Mark 2 Ka-bars and a wide variety of other knives in Vietnam. Depending on each man's preference, they included, but certainly weren't limited to, Gerbers, Randalls and other

well-known and respected fighting blades.

These are featured in numerous accounts from patrols and other missions where the ancient art and discipline of sentry-sticking was brought forward into modern times.

Although rarely carried by SEALs on operations in Vietnam, a highly unusual knife was developed and fielded by the Navy during the war specifically for its frogmen and SEALs who were expected to deal with enemy mines and other explosive devices having magnetic detonators. The nonmagnetic SCUBA Swimmer's Knife is made from a clever metal alloy that is acceptably tough compared to carbon steel without having a magnetic signature. Its distinctive spearpoint blade has a prominent strengthening ridge along the centerline and a saw edge runs almost full length.

First issued in 1962, a total of only about 1,100 were made by the Imperial Knife Company. With only a few known to be in private hands, these unique military knives have become to collectors one of the most sought-after and expensive edged artifacts of the Vietnam War period. The particular specimen seen here is from the American Military Edged Weapon Museum and valued at \$4,000.

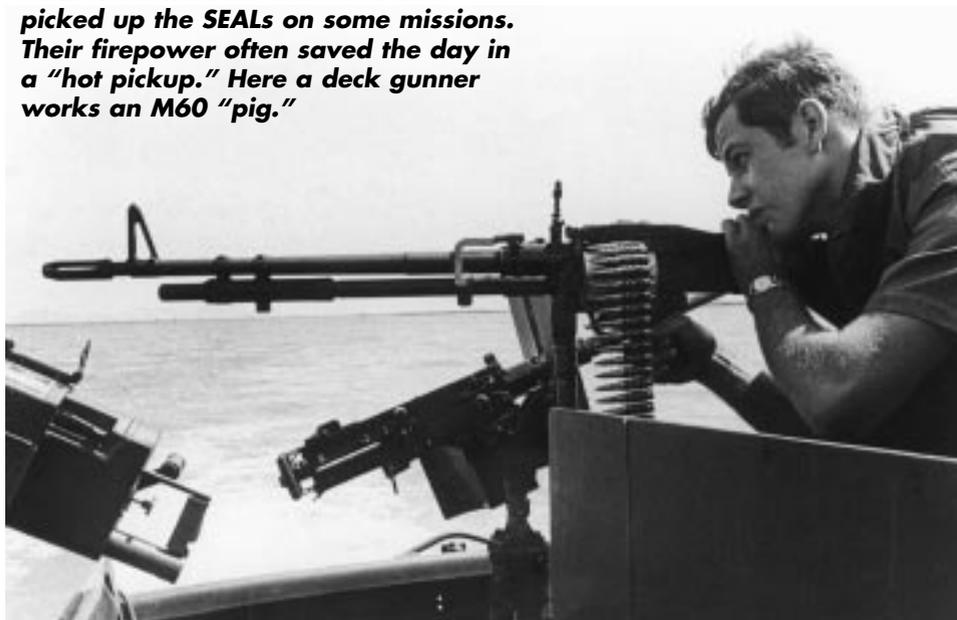


Because some underwater mines are magnetically triggered, the SEALs used special nonmagnetic knives.





STAB assault boats delivered and picked up the SEALs on some missions. Their firepower often saved the day in a "hot pickup." Here a deck gunner works an M60 "pig."



Above, crowded in the close quarters of a rivercraft, this interesting group of SEALs carries a CAR-15 with the later model XM177 suppressor and a West German HK33 5.56mm assault rifle. Judging from the 40mm grenade vest worn by the SEAL in the lower right, the barely visible M16 slung over his shoulder has either an XM148 or XM230 underneath. The dude at the bottom left with a headrag is a Stoner gunner with belted 5.56mm crossed over his chest and a Stoner drum mag peeking out below his right shoulder.

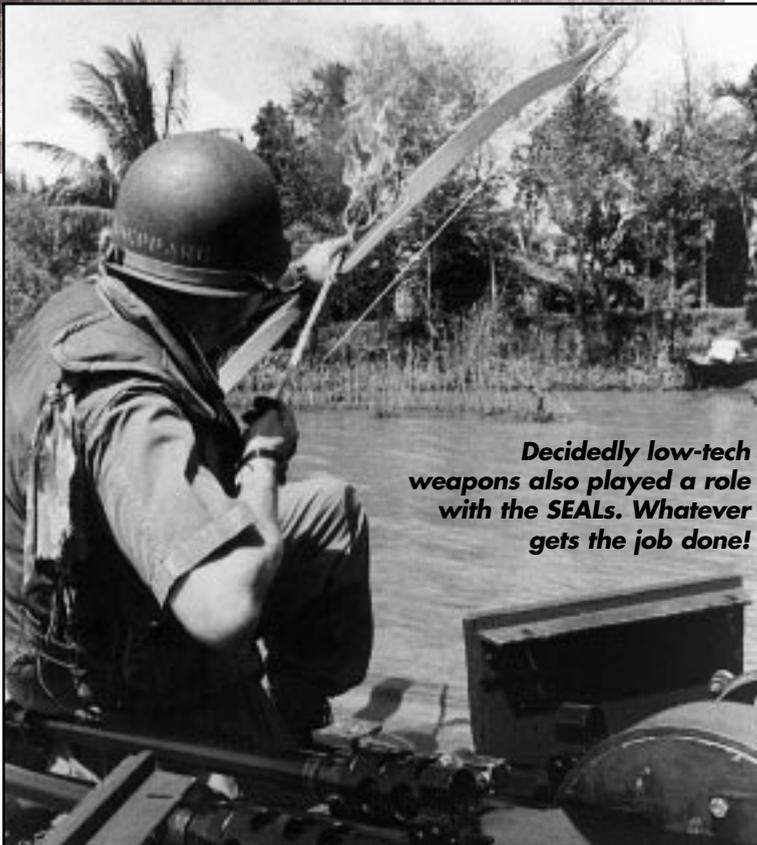
A SHORT HISTORY OF THE SEALS

Responding to a call from President John Kennedy for a strengthening of America's special operations capabilities, the Navy formally commissioned SEAL Teams One and Two on Jan. 1, 1962. Building on the impressive combat record of Underwater Demolition Teams (UDT) that began in World War II and drawing their personnel from these tough and fearless warriors, the new Sea-Air-Land (SEAL) units were organized, trained and equipped for unconventional warfare in oceans, rivers and coastal areas. Their five key missions are to:

- Destroy enemy shipping and its coastal support
- Insert and extract special agents
- Gather intelligence
- Support counter-insurgency
- Assist other U.S. and allied special operations activities

By 1967, platoons from both teams were a regular presence in the Mekong Delta and other areas, operating almost exclusively at night to deny the Viet Cong their traditional advantage.

The basic element of the SEAL platoon is the squad. Usually six to eight in number, they carry an array of specialized weapons of American and sometimes foreign origin that may change based on the mission profile. All are characterized by the ability to



Decidedly low-tech weapons also played a role with the SEALS. Whatever gets the job done!



A five-man SEAL team disembarks in the Mekong Delta with an interesting array of weapons.



quickly put out maximum firepower.

The lethality and survivability of small-group SEAL operations were greatly increased by the Navy's Boat Support Units (BSU) and Seawolf helicopters. The BSUs operated several types of specialized watercraft featuring a variety of heavy weapons and pushed by very powerful engines.

The Seawolf UH-1 "Huey" helicopters provided not only insertion and extraction of SEAL squads, but also were armed with multiple machineguns and air-to-ground

rockets. These aerial gun platforms could unleash a firestorm of steel and lead onto the heads of enemy soldiers foolish enough to tangle with the "men with green faces" as the VC called their fearsome adversaries in camouflage greasepaint.

Despite an ignoble end to the war, the success of SEAL operations in Vietnam was undeniably far out of proportion to

their numbers in-country at any given time. Official accounts put confirmed VC kills at 580 and probable kills at an additional 300. Add to these numbers the devastating effect on enemy offensive capabilities caused by SEAL raids, ambushes, POW recoveries, destroyed ammunition and weapons caches— and countless other ways.



Put a golden trident on my son's chest...



The big .50 Browning machinegun, known officially as the M2, was nicknamed Ma Deuce. It was, and is, the most awesome crew-served heavy machinegun ever to go to war.



A SEAL on Operation Crimson Tide, Vinh Binh Province 1967, carries an M16 with a XM148 grenade launcher. The XM148 was a great improvement over the M79 as now a grenadier also had an assault rifle.



Almost always outnumbered by Viet Cong, SEALs relied on stealth and the cover of night for most of their operations. But when discovered, their formidable arsenal of customized weapons was instantly put to work until an emergency extraction by boat or chopper.



THUMPER

Although the Stoner light machinegun was a remarkable weapon—compact, light and fast—the effectiveness of this direct-fire bullet hose was somewhat limited by its small 5.56mm round. What the Navy SEALs needed in Vietnam was a high explosive, high-angle-of-fire grenade launcher as an area fire weapon to help make up the firepower shortfall.

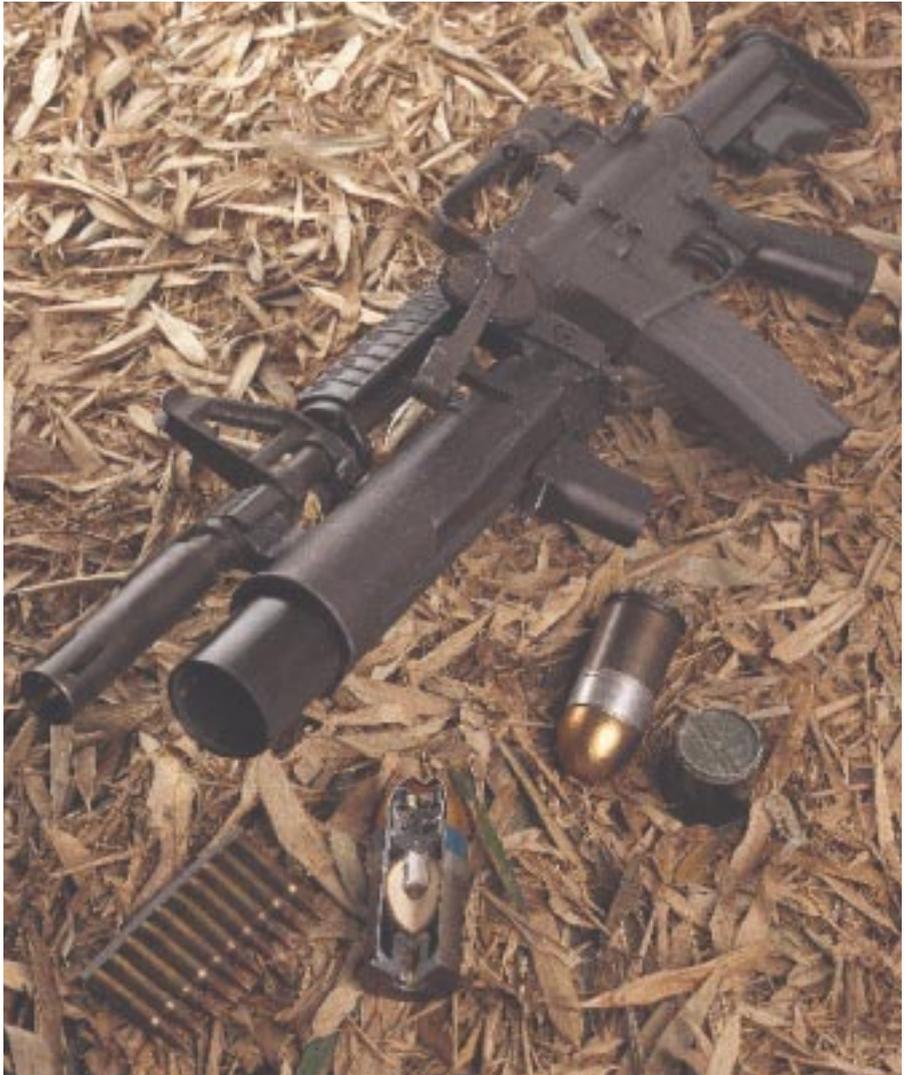
The U.S. Army was the first to field a break-top, single-shot grenade launcher known as the M79. Somewhat reminiscent of a break-open shotgun, the M79 represented a revolutionary development in infantry lethality as it soon developed a reputation for simplicity, reliability, accuracy and spectacular terminal effects. Often called “Thumper” or “Blooper” because of the distinct sound it made on firing, the M79 was a triumph of engineering alchemy against the laws of physics.

The inner workings of its clever ammunition gave it both respectable range and lethality. Its high explosive bursting round contained a formidable, ball-shaped grenade warhead 1.5" in diameter with about 1.25 ozs. of Composition B explosive filler.

The grenade body is made from rectangular-shaped steel wire, notched at regular intervals for consistent fragmentation on detonation. Although its effective casualty radius is listed as five meters, it is still extremely dangerous at twice this distance.

Kicking out this heavy ball to a maximum range of some 400 meters would be a punishing exercise for both the weapon and the gunner if done using conventional means like traditional rifle grenades. But, a clever “high-low propulsion system” is used to fool Mother Nature by venting the high pressure initial boosting charge into the larger low pressure chamber.

In a microsecond after firing, the force of the propellant gas drops from 35,000 psi to about 3,000, and the grenade leaves the rifled barrel at a respectable muzzle velocity of about 250 fps. It is stabilized in flight by spinning at 37,000 rpm, and a mechanical counter inside automatically



The crank-operated Mk 18 grenade launcher was mounted on PBRs (Patrol Boat River) and supplied much-welcomed covering fire for SEAL squads beating feet for the river. Above, an M16 with an XM-148 grenade launcher. Both fired 40mm grenades.

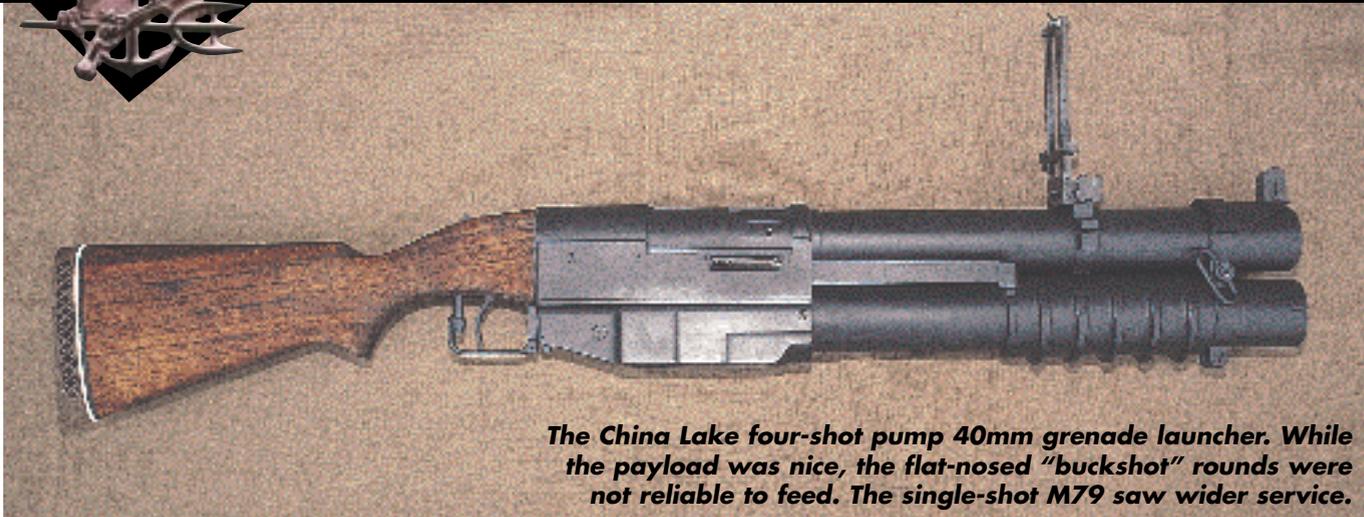
arms the impact fuse after a minimum flight of approximately two to 14 meters, depending on the type of HE grenade.

The M79 is also a damn good piece of “frogman friendly” hardware—sturdy, well configured and easy to shoot with accuracy. Its loaded weight is just under 6.5 lbs., and it measures a compact 28.8" with a respectable barrel length of 14".

Its hardwood stock takes an appre-

ciable upturn at the buttplate to allow comfortable aiming from the shoulder, and it is thoughtfully fitted with a rubber recoil pad. Its flip-up, ladder-type rear sight is fully adjustable for windage, and its prominent elevation markings go from 75 to 375 meters in 25-meter increments. An elevating screw wheel is also provided for fine adjustments.

Both the barrel locking latch lever and



The China Lake four-shot pump 40mm grenade launcher. While the payload was nice, the flat-nosed "buckshot" rounds were not reliable to feed. The single-shot M79 saw wider service.

the safety are prominently located on top of the weapon—operation couldn't be simpler. All of this combines to provide a handy and lethal weapon with a practical rate of fire of about seven to 10 grenades per minute.

More Firepower

While the M79 quickly gained favor with SEAL teams in the bush—and the boat crewmen who had to put them ashore and

pull them out under intense enemy fire—its single shot design was just not fast enough when things were getting really hot. In particular, SEALs wanted something like a chopped M79 suitable for attaching to their M16 rifles.

As luck would have it, there were already a few underbarrel launchers in development as part of an ambitious but ultimately ill-fated Army program called

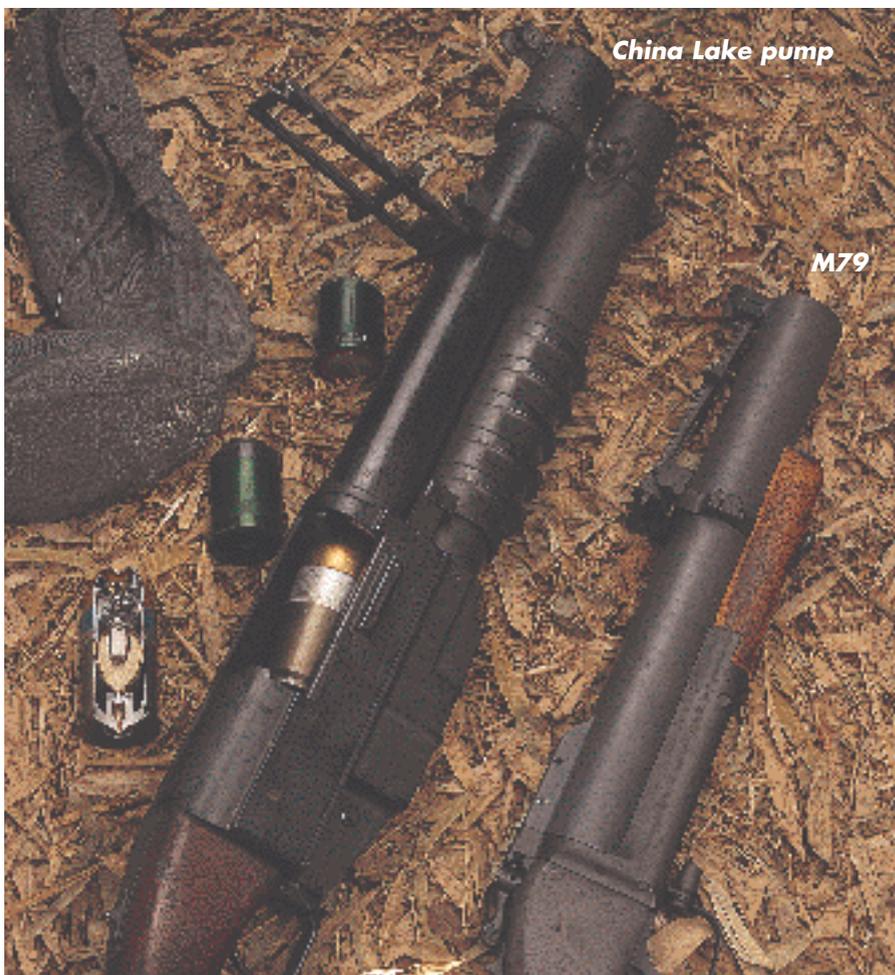
SPIW or "Special Purpose Individual Weapon." While most of the sometimes bizarre SPIW hardware would prove unworkable and/or impractical, one piece designed by Karl Lewis and Rob Roy showed sufficient promise to be put into limited production as part of Colt's CAR-15 family of weapons.

Called the "Colt Grenade Launcher" by the manufacturer, the Army bought 30 of them in March 1965 and re-designated the weapon as the "XM148" for engineering and test purposes. The XM148 itself is a simple device, characterized by a 10" barrel that unlocks and slides forward, opening the chamber so that a single round can be tipped up inside from underneath.

Pulling back on the stubby pistol grip slides the barrel rearward, where it locks to the face of the receiver/firing mechanism. Its main failings come from the array of flimsy things that stick out to snag on vegetation or get broken in semi-rough handling.

Once a round is chambered and locked, the safety is engaged then the weapon is cocked using an external lever at the rear of the receiver. The trigger itself is mounted on a long coathanger-looking length of bent wire that snakes around the right side of the receiver, putting it into range of the trigger finger as one grips the magazine.

The very elaborate sight bar necessary for accurate long-range firing sticks out on the left side of the launcher in a manner guaranteeing all sorts of woes in handling. It was, no doubt, a prime candidate for being left behind on SEAL operations where lots of hip-shot, live fire training sort of made up for not having a real sight for close combat grenade blooping.

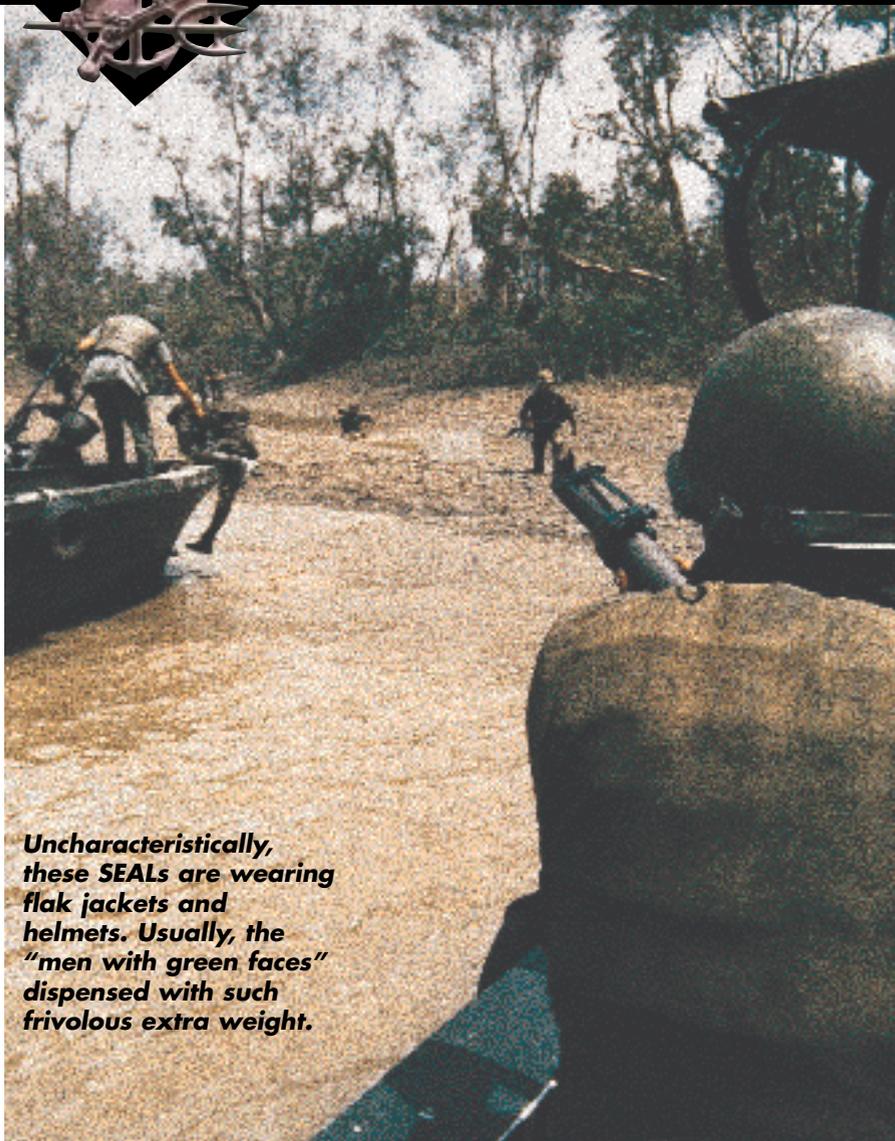




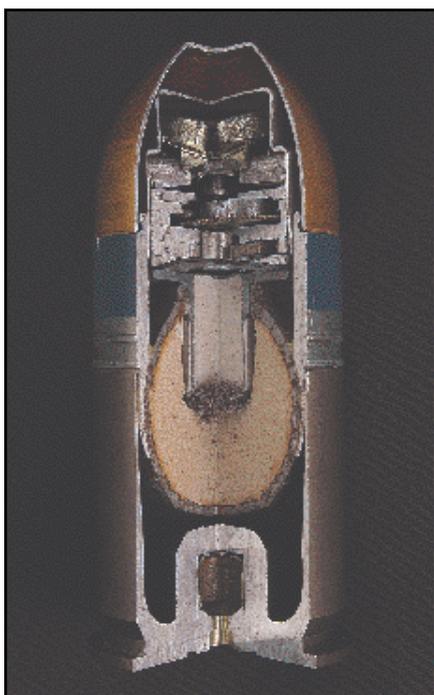
A Colt XM177E2 with an XM-148 grenade launcher. Ammo for the 40mm "thumper" included both HE (gold nose) and buckshot.

The 40mm machinegun Mk 19 fires high-pressure M384 ammo developed for helicopter gunships. This RAG (River Assault Group) is brimming with firepower.





Uncharacteristically, these SEALs are wearing flak jackets and helmets. Usually, the "men with green faces" dispensed with such frivolous extra weight.



This combination of an assault rifle and grenade launcher was, no doubt, greatly appreciated by men who were almost always outnumbered by the enemy and whose lives depended on putting up an instant wall of lead and fire when discovered.

Improved Launcher

"The M79 is just fine. But this one shot just doesn't get it. That's why we prefer the XM148 underneath the M16. Now, if you had a grenadier who could fire more than one shot without having to reload his weapon, that would be great. The M79 is a nice weapon, but it would be better if it held more shells. Isn't there some way you could make it a repeater?," wondered SEAL Chief James Watson. It turns out his request fell on sympathetic ears at the China Lake, Calif., Special Operations Branch of the Naval Weapons Center, a sort of a small arms Skunk Works. Their technicians and engineers apparently paid close attention to reports from a number of SEALs, including Chief Watson, who was on his first visit to China Lake in April of 1968, just back from Vietnam.

The first prototype was a triple barrel monstrosity that was likely another failed byproduct of the SPIW program. It was quickly rejected. But the second was almost a dream come true for the SEAL Chief. "What the guys at China Lake handed me was a 40mm pump action grenade launcher, looking for all the world like a giant sawed-off pump shotgun," Watson recounts in *Walking Point*.

The prototype slide-action M79 mutant could pump out four high explosive rounds as fast as the operator could jack the forearm back and forth. Unfortunately, it was several more months before the garage-shop prototype could be turned into a short-run production gun and be shipped over to Vietnam.

Despite Watson's initial enthusiasm and the weapon's obvious merits, there was a downside. With each round weighing about a half-pound, the whole package of gun and on-board ammo load was really something to consider.

Also, due to the design of its feed mechanism, it was limited to round nosed high explosive shells only. The stubbier buckshot and flechette rounds with their flat caps just wouldn't reliably make it from the tubular magazine and into the chamber. This severely limited the pump grenade launcher's versatility as a short-

Over the next two years several hundred limited production models were procured and sent to Vietnam for combat evaluation by the Army and other services, clamped underneath M16 rifles. Unfortunately, these suffered not only from the aforementioned complicated configuration and flimsy exterior pieces, but also they showed an alarming tendency for receiver-cracking. There was little realistic hope for fixing all of this, which eventually lead to the XM148's total rejection by the Army in 1967.

It would be nearly two years before a much simpler and sturdier design would begin reaching combat troops in Vietnam in effective numbers. The SEALs, meanwhile, seemed to like the Colt launcher well enough and were apparently able to keep it working and shooting, despite its design flaws and their harsh operational environment.

range anti-ambush weapon.

According to researcher Kevin Dockery, not more than about 20 made their way to Vietnam and the search for a man-portable multi-shot grenade launcher of practical size and weight continued. In fact, the SEALs are still looking even today.

Grenade Gatling

Back on the specialized support boats that SEALs relied on as combat water taxis, the grenade launcher problem had long been a hot topic. Fiercely dedicated to the mission of delivering and recovering direct action teams— often under intense fire— the “brown water navy” of sailors manning PBRs (Patrol Boat Rivers), STABs (Strike Assault Boats) and other fast but vulnerable watercraft had a relatively crude, but undeniably effective grenade machinegun.

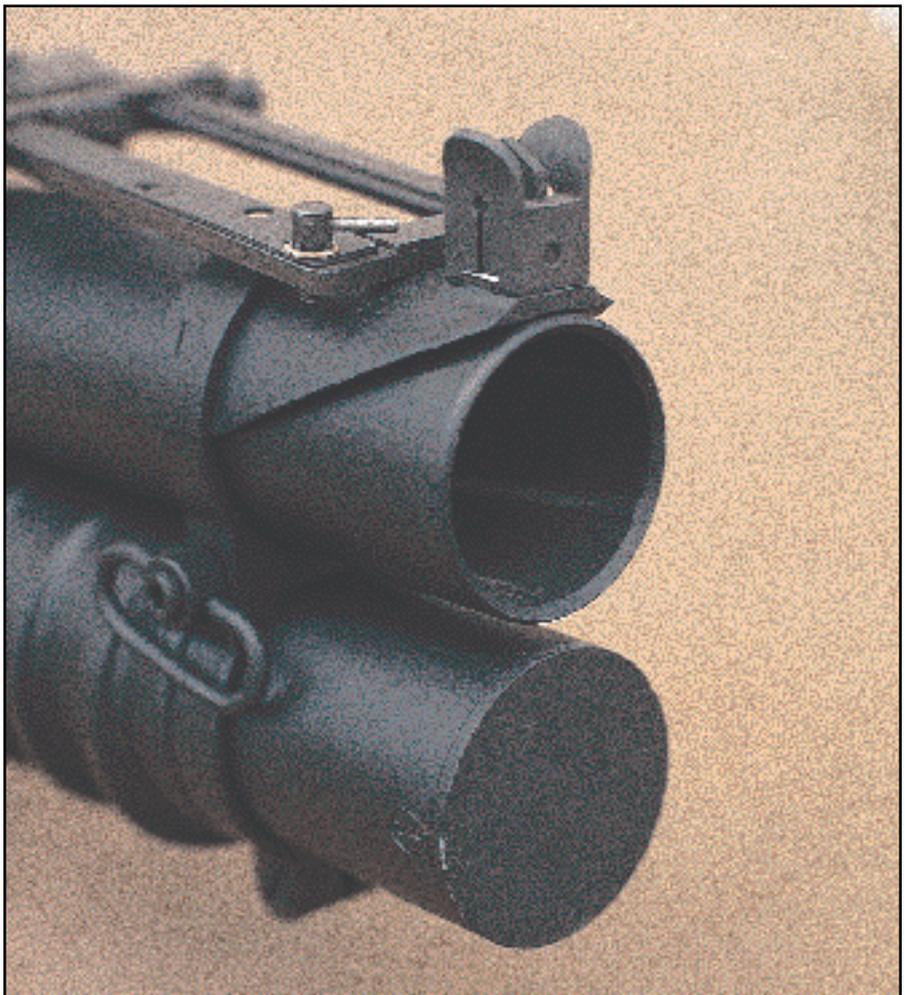
The Honeywell Mark 18 Rapid Fire Gun was a sheet metal box with a hand crank on the side and a stubby barrel that fed and fired belted 40mm grenades. The same high explosive rounds for the M79 and XM148 could be pumped out of the “Honey” at a maximum rate of about four rounds per second— a considerable increase in firepower.

Although the Mark 18 did great work in some really tough situations, it wasn’t ideal. This was primarily due to the limited range of its low recoil ammunition, feed problems from its mylar-backed web ammo belts, and flimsy construction.

Louisville Sluggers

In July and August of 1966, two fully automatic alternatives were in the works at the Naval Ordnance Station, Louisville, Ky. According to the legendary firearms designer and historian Col. George Chinn in his invaluable five-volume series *The Machine Gun*, this was a “maximum-effort basis” drawing on all the accumulated wisdom of large caliber repeating guns of the past and the best work of experienced weapons engineers. Chinn himself was right in the middle of this as design engineer under Bill Schnatter.

The first to hit the field was the Mark 20, firing the respectable but admittedly low launch pressure, short-range M406 HE grenades. Utilizing a clever “push-pull” system of heavy springs behind the bolt and around the barrel, the Mark 20 cycled like a conventional machinegun using recoil and blow-forward forces generated by firing.



The bolt of the China Lake pump grenade launcher. Below, the front sight was adjustable for elevation.



The three grenade launchers used by the SEALs (top to bottom): China Lake pump, XM-184 underbarrel to an M16 and "blooper," the M79 single-shot.



The Mk 18 Rapid Fire Gun fired 40mm grenades via a handcrank. This weapon provided tremendous close-range fire support to the SEALs.

This eliminated the need for an awkward hand crank, which allowed the gunner to concentrate on aiming. It fed the gunner to pre-loaded metallic linked belts. The receiver housing and internals were also beefier, and the Mark 20 soon developed a good reputation for reliability and effectiveness.

In dramatic contrast, the Mark 19 was designed to handle the impressive new M384 high pressure, high explosive grenade developed for UH-1 helicopter gunships such as the Navy's Seawolf. Astonishingly, given the degree of difficulty inherent in the project, the first examples of the Mark 19 Mod 0 reportedly arrived in Vietnam in January 1968 for use on Navy patrol boats and Huey helicopters operating from Dong Tam.

Although necessarily weighing about 50 pounds, twice that of its predecessors, it boasted a 400 rpm rate of fire, muzzle velocity of 800 fps and a giant's reach out to 2,200 meters. The selective fire, blow-back-operated Mark 19 quickly found favor among Navy "River Rats" who appreciated its much longer range and higher rate of fire when dealing with a variety of enemy threats.

It was quite suitable for mounting on



PBRs, “Mike Boats” and just about any other of the unusual close support craft the Navy developed for use in Vietnam. The Mod 3 version of the Mark 19 is still in service today in boats, vehicles and on ground.

Fraggings

While the main focus of this feature is necessarily on grenade launchers, the lowly hand grenade itself should not be overlooked. In particular, the rock-simple and usually utterly reliable fragmentation grenade was just the ticket for situations where SEALs found themselves at uncomfortably close range to the VC.

Just clamp your hand over the safety lever, pull the pin, and toss the “frag” out— trying not to hit anything that would bounce it back in your lap— then get your head way down. If all is going well, there would be a very satisfying explosion in about four seconds.

Nicknamed the “lemon frag” because of the distinctive shape of its smooth, sheet metal exterior, the M26 represented a major leap in combat effectiveness over the old Mk 2 “pineapple” that was first used in World War I. Instead of kicking out relatively few irregular chunks of cast iron and lots of metal dust when detonated, the lemon unleashed a hornet’s nest of hundreds of small, rectangular wire pieces.

Also, filled with energetic Composition B explosive, its blast and concussion effect was dramatically greater. SEALs tended to carry a lot of frags and other

specialized grenades for use in ambushes, hooch and bunker clearing, and also tossed freely and regularly around moored boats and floating bases to discourage enemy swimmers.

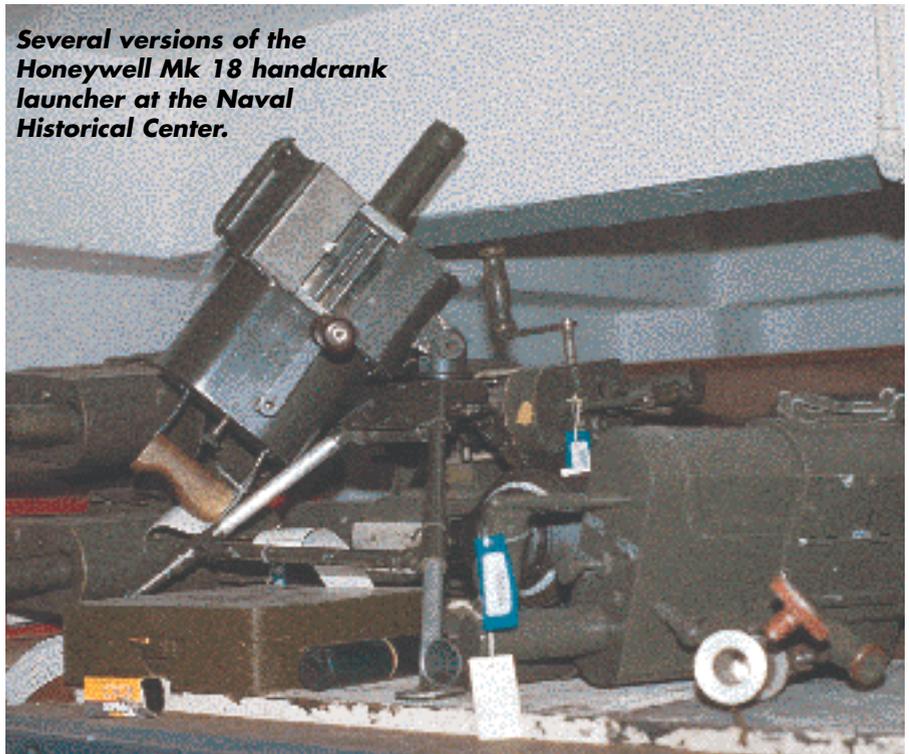
Fire Superiority

Indirect fire weapons such as grenade launchers and hand grenades provided the outnumbered SEAL squad operating

in Vietnam with lethal capabilities that were absolutely essential to its survivability and mission effectiveness. Reaching out and violently exploding in places where direct fire Stoners and M16s just couldn’t get, they also gave SEALs and support elements the highly desirable advantage of instantaneously bringing hellfire and damnation onto the enemy.



Several versions of the Honeywell Mk 18 handcrank launcher at the Naval Historical Center.



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There are many important aspects to shooting a handgun. However, in a self-defense situation, no other aspect of shooting outweighs the importance of bringing your weapon to bear.

Most firearms training schools emphasize the importance of safety, sight alignment, trigger manipulation, stance, grip, tactical reloading and shooting on the move— all of which are part and parcel to proper, safe and effective handling of your firearm. However, if you fail to deploy your weapon from its carry position to muzzle on target, then you may as well be holding a roll of wet toilet paper in your hand.

There are a few items of consideration should you chose to carry a firearm for self-protection. First, where you carry your handgun. If you carry a handgun on your person, it should be carried in the same location every time to facilitate programming your draw through “muscle memory” built from practice.

The second issue is how you carry your sidearm— hammer down, cocked-and-locked, round in the chamber. The same consistency you apply to where you carry should also apply to how you carry.

Keeping these important concepts of location and condition in mind, let’s take an in-depth look into the draw of the handgun as taught by Gunsite. The five-step “Gunsite draw” is the basic method used by everyone from top IPSC competitors to SF operators. It’s that good.

The Gunsite Draw

**THE CLASSIC FIVE-STEP PRESENTATION, AS
TAUGHT BY THE GURU**

By Steve Tarani
Photos by Ichiro Nagata



Hands Together

The first step is to bring both hands together at center. This is accomplished by simultaneously placing your support hand squarely in front and against your belly while your weapon hand completes the action of purchasing a secure grip on your holstered handgun.

What defines a secure grip is: full contact of the weapon hand, ensuring maximum surface contact with the palm and all fingertips. To control muzzle flip, the web between thumb and forefinger should be tight against the tang and positioned as close as possible to the bore.

Once you've welded your hand into a secure grip on your handgun, don't change it. Don't wiggle your fingers around or try to re-seat the gun in your hand. Keeping a secured grip on your handgun throughout the entire presentation ensures stability of placement and swiftness of movement.

There are three superb reasons for placing your support hand squarely on your belly:

- 1) You won't leave your hand "dangling" out there to be shot at or cut by your opponent if he's at close range and armed with a firearm or an edged weapon.

- 2) You avoid covering your own hand with your own muzzle.

- 3) With both hands near your center, you're setting up perfectly for the second step in the presentation, which would enable you to immediately and effectively fire a round prior to completion of the presentation, if need be.



Keep your elbow pointed up and straight back during this first step. A common error is that shooters tend to point their elbow outward and away from their bodies. This movement can sometimes add as much as a quarter to a

half second to the draw. If your elbow is pointed out and away from your body it must then be repositioned to go back into a straight line to continue the forward-draw stroke. This takes twice as much time as necessary.

2



Clear Leather

The second step is to pull the weapon up and out of the holster in an action which is commonly referred to as “clearing leather.” This is a one-hand step; the support hand stays put where it was placed on the front of your belly.

Again, be sure to avoid pointing your elbow out to the side during this second step, as this would add unnecessary movement and unwanted time to your response.

Some instructors will advise that you also lean your body slightly forward at this time to set up for your shot. This step initiates the beginning stages of building a reliable shooting platform from which to accurately and intentionally discharge a round.



3



Lock The Hands

The third step is to move your support hand exactly lateral to its resting position on the belly, while simultaneously using your weapon hand to rock the muzzle up and forward toward the target in front of your body.

Now smack the knuckles of your weapon hand into full contact with the palm and fingers of your support hand.

Solid as catching a baseball with a catcher’s mitt, the support hand and weapon hand should work in unison to secure a solid and stable shooting platform from which to fire the handgun. If necessary, a round could be discharged from this position, Step 3, of the presentation.

One common mistake is that some students tend to add an extra step by inadvertently bringing their hands together away from the body. This again wastes time and hampers accuracy, as both hands are moving through space independently.

Bringing your hands together away from your body would needlessly increase presentation time and additionally compromise accurate snap shooting if a hurried round had to be fired in an emergency.





TRAINING TIP

Avoid the common mistake of bringing your hands together away from your body. Lock it up fast and tight, which is safer and smoother.

Punch It Out

The next step is to quickly move both hands forward in a crisp, simultaneous, straight-line punching movement, keeping both elbows pointing downward and in tight against your body.

In a perfect world of safety and handling, you would always keep your finger off the trigger until your sights were on the target. However, due to the gravity of an emergency or a life-threatening situation, it may be necessary to point shoot at this step of your presentation.



5



On Target

The final step is to bring your weapon up from the Step 4 position, punching directly into the target. This is accomplished via an aggressive, straight-line and level thrusting movement of the handgun.

Once students have demonstrated competency in execution, steps 4 and 5 are subsequently taught as a single step and executed as such.

Be careful not to “bowl” your muzzle. Remember that the shortest possible distance between two points is a straight line. One common error is that students tend to swing the muzzle up in a U-shaped arc instead of a straight-line movement during this final step. This unnecessary movement not only takes too much time but also contributes to a poorly aligned shot. It is important to realize that you never get a second chance in a life-threatening situation.

It is highly recommended that you drill each of these five steps individually, then combine them. The final stage of training is to execute all five steps as one crisp and fluid motion, the entire presentation executed as a single step.

Additionally, multiple repetitions of both dry-fire and live-fire practice can enhance your presentation skills and develop reactive response or muscle memory. The majority of master level instructors agree that a student begins to develop reactive motor skill response somewhere between 1,000 and 3,000 repetitions.



Steve Tarani is an adjunct instructor for Gunsite. He is also a reserve Deputy Sheriff with the Pershing County Sheriff's Office in northwestern Nevada. He can be reached at (949) 252-1962.



TRAINING TIP

Keep the elbow pointed up and straight back to minimize wasted motion on the draw.

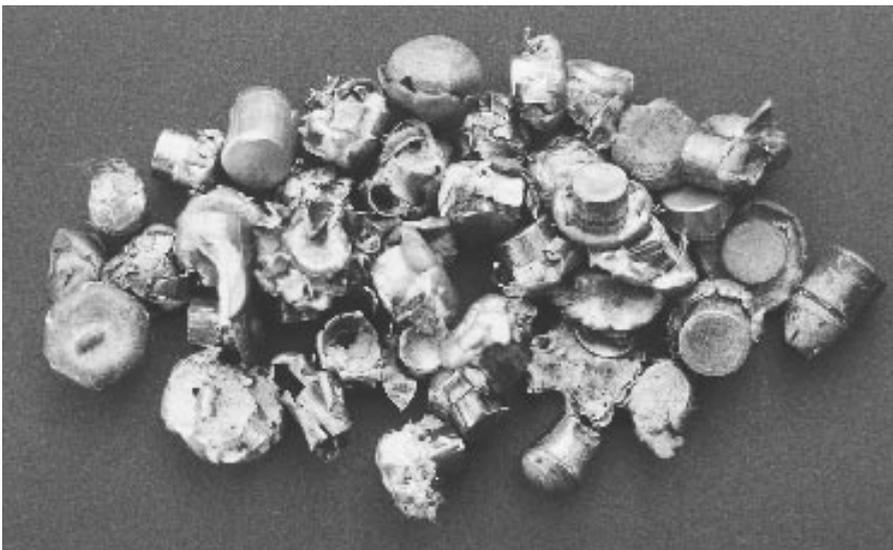
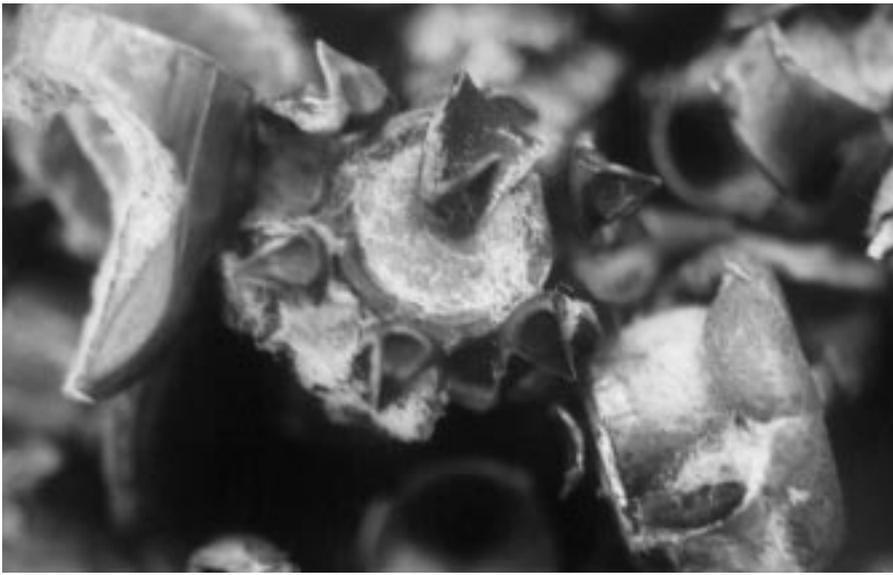


HANDGUN STOPPING POWER



**One Shot Stops, 9mm vs. .45, Magic Bullets—
The Controversy rages in the debate
over terminal ballistics.**

By Bob Campbell



Medical examiner's morgue.

Detractors of laboratory tests feel these tests cannot duplicate differences in point of impact, clothing, attitude, muscle structure and intoxication. But a ballistic scientist does not ask us to believe anything. He simply presents the results of certain tests. The results are not only verifiable, they are repeatable, the real test of science.

Stopping power "studies," on the other hand, ask us to believe in someone's conclusion. Assuming such compilations are valid requires a considerable leap of faith. Reports are often sensationalized, even glamorized. Are such studies grounded in reality? Are they even useful? Can they be supported by scientific methods?

I don't have all the answers, but I do know this—cartridges and loads are not as important as basic shooting skills. I don't believe trick loads significantly alter the ability of a smallbore cartridge to inflict damage. I simply don't accept many published reports because they are anecdotal and based on hearsay.

I respect some compilers for personal reasons, but believe their methodology is flawed. In other cases, there are conclusions made that are so irrelevant to the reality of interpersonal combat that they are not even worth publishing.

A Skeptical Eye

When it comes to the various handgun "studies," we must consider their validity. These "researchers" sell books that are not the King James version of stopping power. Yet the figures expressed are often quoted in the popular press as gospel.

The best known of the handgun stopping power studies are those of Evan Marshall and the Police Marksman's Association (PMA). A criticism of Marshall's work is that he has not allowed others to inspect and review his source material. To some, this reduces the validity of the study to zero. Certainly, such unsubstantiated work does not meet an investigative standard. As a longtime officer, I understand both sides of this debate. Confidentiality and respect for families must be considered.

Cops who collect shooting histories may not have engaged in much gunplay, but have arrived just after quite a few gunfights ended. Cops from Area Six in Chicago, Fort Apache (the Bronx) in New York, or The Wall in California have a good idea of the type of damage different handgun calibers inflict. They are good investigators as well. They



realize that three eyewitnesses testifying in good faith may perceive events three different ways.

Human perceptions differ. The road to a detective's badge in many agencies is through the traffic division. Working wreck scenes is small-scale investigation, and separates the sleuths from the duffers in some cases.

Applying normal investigative standards to stopping power studies often reveals bankrupt methodology or standards. These "studies" do not even meet the criteria demanded by some agencies in ascertaining who is at fault in a fender bender.

Most police trainers have long abandoned the attempt to study stopping power and instead have concentrated on tactical movement and the actions of felons in combat. Tactics carry the day. By criticizing issue arms and equipment, we undermine an officer's confidence in his gear, something he is usually unable to change. Sure, a DAO 9mm loaded with subsonic ammunition is my gun from hell too, but a good man or woman behind the sights can make a difference. Tactics and marksmanship are a better answer than hotter loads in minor calibers.

One writer did the boys and girls in blue no favor when he stated in pat terms that load selection is more important than shot placement. His reasoning was that we can control load selection, but not marksmanship. Evidently he does not realize that shots that do not find critical areas are relatively ineffective. Any hunter knows better, and hunting lessons do indeed translate to self-defense. A gut-shot man behaves just like a gut-shot deer—both are up and running for quite some time.

Thousands Of Stories

Take Marshall's work at face value and accept that it contains thousands of histories. I am sure it does. Is the methodology used by Marshall flawed? Many of us believe the decision to eliminate multiple bullet strikes from the data base makes small caliber loads look much better than real world experience would indicate.

Most handgun fights will be multiple



strike incidents. One shot failures would be rare. After all, if the first shot fails, won't you fire another? Besides, trained shooters often fire double or triple taps before a subject can fall.

A problem with handgun histories is qualifying hits. I have on hand a report from police sources in which a coroner and a medical examiner, both reputable men, disagreed concerning the number of hits on a felon's body.

In a class I once attended, a medical examiner spoke in glowing terms of a certain new generation hollowpoint. He showed an impressive slide in which a bad guy—"Satan Lives" was tattooed on his chest—took a single hit which produced a long and wide wound track. Years later, the officer involved in the incident spoke at a seminar. He noted the man took the shot, stopped his attack, and remained mobile for some time, asking the officer to call an ambulance. The felon expired. The officer was certain the man could have continued the fight had he so wished. Two conflicting opinions on the same shooting.

Some adversaries are "machine-gunned" in shootings—five .38s, seven .45s, or 41 9mms. Excited, frightened men empty their guns under deadly



stress. If the felon goes down in such a volley, it may have been a one-shot stop. The volley that leaves a felon standing is always a failure to stop.

Dismissing multiple hits eliminates the majority of smallbore shootings. This renders Marshall's study relying upon such data flawed.

Marshall's work is far from worthless, but his best advice is found between the lines. He stresses the three components of stopping power—marksmanship, marksmanship and marksmanship. Marshall notes we are not very bright if we have time to arm ourselves with a long gun and fail to do so. In comparison to a 12 gauge or a .223 rifle, the "weak .38" and "strong .45" are more alike than they differ. A sobering thought.

Tactical Info

Shooting histories should be used for tactical information first and bullet perfor-



mance information second. As for lab work, gelatin is homogenous and flesh and blood are heterogeneous. It is not the same, but gelatin is a good media for comparing bullet performance. What counts is point of impact and perhaps the adversary's tox sheet. (Certain drugs are not called painkillers for nothing.)

Whether or not we regard the studies as valid— and many disregard the PMA study as well as Marshall's— there is much to be learned between the lines. Bullet selection is more important in the weaker calibers. One authority, Dr. Vincent J. DiMiao, has stated that perhaps half of all handgun bullets fail to expand in the body. The works of this respected medical examiner do not inspire confidence in smallbore hollowpoints. We are led to the conclusion that all handguns are weak instruments.

The PMA's hit probability ratings are more a product of training than anything, but are very interesting. The .45

auto and .357 Magnum revolvers showed the highest hit probability of any service handguns.

Hit probability is a side issue, but one which remains comparatively valid if not an exact tally of hits and misses.

Fun With Math

One "study" shows a 9mm cartridge that has proven to be a 50 percent stopper. Hit probability in this agency has proven to be 50 percent— far higher than average. What are the chances two felons will be stopped with two shots? Given that only one out of two rounds will hit Felon X and Felon Y, at least four shots will have to be fired to connect, and then only one opponent is likely to be stopped.

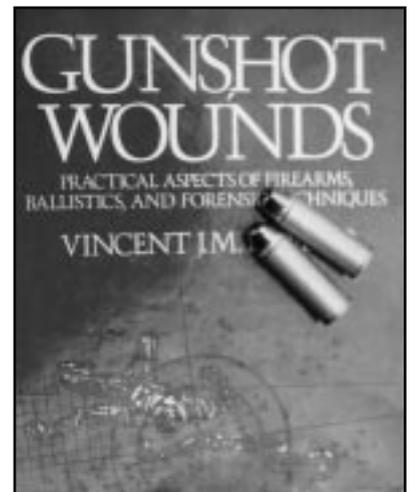
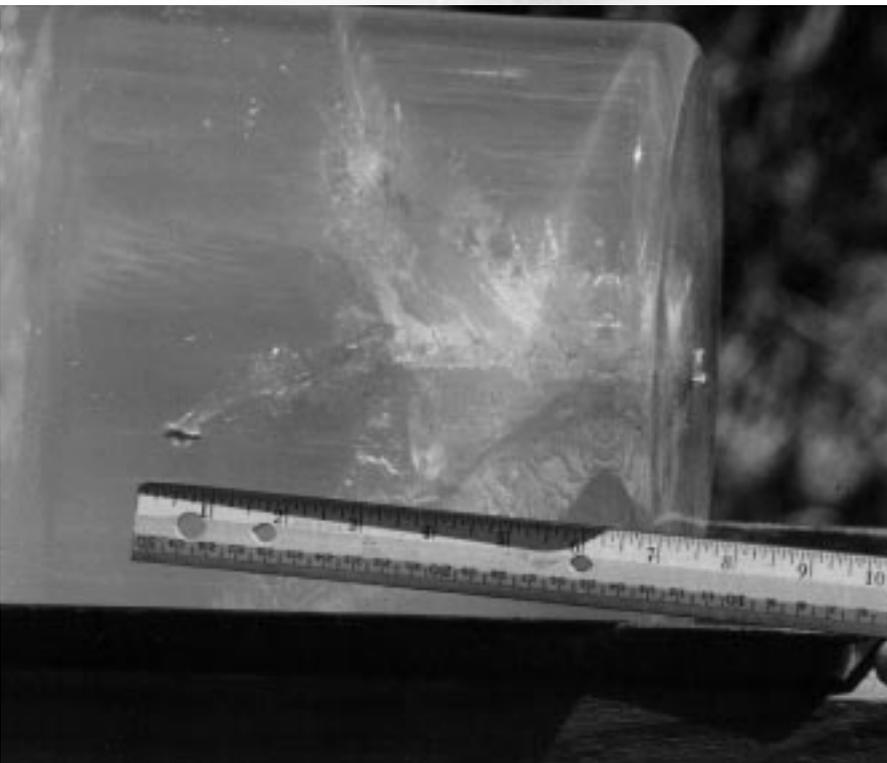
Here's the math on that probability: $.50 \times .50 = .25$. What you have is a one-in-four chance of stopping Felon X with one shot.

What about the .357 Magnum revolver, per PMA stats? It works out like this: $.75 \times .60 = .45$. The conclusion, if we were peddling this "study" as a major new book, would be this: The .357 Magnum is nearly twice as likely to produce a one-shot stop as a 9mm Luger. So there you have it. How much faith can we put in these studies?

The Answer

What stops human adversaries during a deadly attack? A brain shot or a spine shot are the only two instant incapacitators. Damage to blood bearing organs which causes rapid blood loss and a drop of pressure causes the body to shut down.

Sometimes common sense is the best guide. Bigger bullets cause more damage. Bigger knives cut better. Bigger engines pull better. However, handgun bullets aren't very big. Accuracy can make up for power— the reverse is seldom true.



HK

PDW



A Totally Radical New Weapon With a Sizzling New Cartridge, HK's Personal Defense Weapon is the Latest Innovation From the Engineers in Oberndorf.

By Sebestyen Gorka

Polymer construction in firearms is actually not as new as many people think. Gaston Glock did not invent the first "plastic pistol." Polymers were introduced to the mass market by HK in the 1980s with their revolutionary P9 and VP70 models. Likewise, the idea of bottlenecking a straight-wall pistol cartridge to improve feed reliability and heighten velocities harks back to when Paul Mauser and Georg Luger decided to chamber a .30 caliber bottleneck round in the C-96 and the original Navy Luger.

Once again HK has taken existing technologies to a new plateau with the development and final arrival of their new Personal Defense Weapon (PDW), which is a sub-compact machinegun. The new PDW is not to be confused with the older MP5 PDW, which was simply a radically chopped and restocked MP5.

Our visit to HK's U.S. facility in Sterling, Va., began with an introduction to what the cognoscenti term the company's "Gray Room."

A true labor of love compiled over the last couple





of years, this small yet priceless asset is a secure room in which the employees have collected examples of the company's mainline products, but more importantly, have deposited working models of some of the most *outré* and as yet unknown guns that have come from the advanced minds located in Oberndorf.

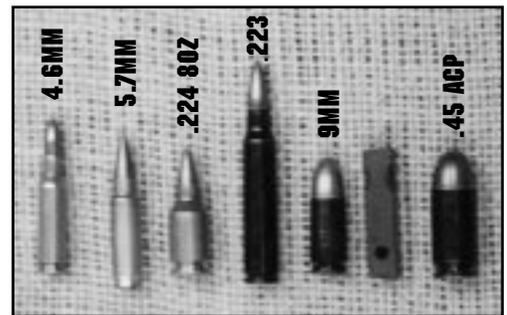
Even from the few pictures shown here, it should be clear that there is enough innovative information on tap in the Gray Room to keep even a lukewarm HK enthusiast enthralled. Following a most gracious and lengthy walk through the collection, the focus of my visit turned to HK's newest and hottest weapons.

The first was a radically shortened version of the Bundeswehr's new assault rifle, the G36, the civilian version of which is now available in America as the SL8-1. This latest variant is called the G36 Commando and is a full-auto capable, .223 Rem. chambered, folding stock assault weapon with a 9" barrel that is actually as small and even lighter (!) than the original and now legendary 9mm MP5.

Whilst the G36 has already become the new official German infantry arm, the G36 Commando was designed for use by the elite GSG 9 Border Guard intervention units. Given its concealable size coupled to an awesome potential rate of fire (100-round drum mags being an option) and a deadlier, non-pistol cartridge, the Commando will be an obvious choice for the world's more up-to-date close protection details.

Add to that the fact that the G36 will probably come in at \$200 less than the current list \$1,400 for a retractable stocked MP5 and one would be hard pressed to deny the future popularity of the new design.

The G36 Commando utilizes a gas-operated, short-stroke-piston, rotary camming bolt mechanism just like the full-sized G36 and the SL8. Trigger groups can be had in five variations: semi-auto only, semi with two-round burst, semi and full, or semi, two-round



and full. Cyclic rate floats between 700 and 750 rpm, depending on bullet weight.

The barrel is conventionally rifled, not HK's famous polygonal system, with six lands and grooves with a 1:7 right-hand twist. Overall length is 28.3" deployed and 19.7" with the stock folded. Unloaded, the Commando weighs in at 6.2 lbs., the same as the diminutive MP5 PDW.

Three pairs of attachment points are provided for Picatinny rails or other sundry bolt-ons. It can, of course, be had with the Hensoldt 1.5x or 3x infantry scope made for the standard G36, or with





a combination scope and “piggy-backed” red-dot sight.

Bold New Design

Leaving the G36 and moving to the subject at hand, the new PDW, this radically new gun is not even instantly recognizable as an HK product. Gone are the trademark trigger guard, grip profile and hooded foresight of the G3/MP family. Instead the user is presented with a personal defense weapon, hence the name, of machinepistol proportions which is very light, thanks to extensive use of synthetics, and which fires a brand new HK proprietary bottlenecked round.

In its most compact state the PDW measures only 13.4" long and 6.8" high and has the appearance of a beefy polymer handgun. The weapon can in fact be used in this state, even fired one-handedly. However, the true value of the PDW comes when it is fully deployed. This is done by first gripping the horizontally folded foregrip and pulling it down, much in the same way as with the similarly radical and excellent JATI-MATIC SMG from Finland.

Unlike with JATI, this foregrip does not act as a cocking or charging device. Instead the PDW has a double railed charging handle located directly above the retracted buttplate. The handle is somewhat reminiscent of the AR's charging handle.

Once the foregrip is down and the weapon charged, all that is left to do is extend the retractable stock. Now the user has the weapon ready to shoulder fire, but instead of loosing just a slew of pistol caliber rounds, the PDW operator is armed with a medium-caliber high-velocity round with a steel body and “spoon tipped” bullet that is lethal to attackers at longer ranges,

even those wearing body armor.

The heart of the gun is the new 4.6mm bottlenecked round which was developed, or should I say rediscovered, by HK. I say “rediscovered” because the company has experimented with such calibers and bullet profiles before, but never has HK come as far as with the PDW.

The gun has been designed primarily as a highly portable yet deadly personal sidearm for use by non-front line troops. I am sure that its end-users will eventually include covert operators, VIP protection details and other elite cadres. The PDW hopes to fill that troublesome niche for the support trooper's gun.

In the past, this category has often been an orphan of sorts. Some armies have their drivers, signallers, tankers and other non-dedicated personnel carry just a pistol. Some went to larger yet more economic pistol caliber submachineguns, such as the L2A3 SMG, or Sterling.

Others tried to develop modern machinepistols, as with the JATI-MATIC or Beretta's Model 93R. The rest simply forced their rear echelon men to make do with full-sized assault rifles or, at best, the folding





stock equivalent, such as the HK G3A4, or Galil ARq. Many of the users and the procurers were understandably unsatisfied with these solutions, most often with the limited power that pistol caliber weapons have.

In the PDW, HK may have the answer. First, the gun is eminently portable, weighing a scant 2.6 lbs., or the same as a loaded Beretta M9 pistol. It is already available with a tactical leg holster that allows one to carry it as a pistol.

As to firepower, the PDW can be fitted with a 20- round flush-fitting magazine or a 40 round extended mag. The almost 90° grip angle is not the most comfortable—early versions had a milder rake— but the configuration will be familiar to all who have used an Uzi, Mac or Steyr TMP.

The ambidextrous selector is similar to existing machinepistols, going from top to bottom, safe to single to full. The mag release is also ambidextrous and works downwards like a Walther P99 or HK USP.

More importantly, the PDW comes standard with a very compact zero magnification reflex sight made by Hensoldt. The red-dot sight is very fast into action and will save on training in comparison to traditional sights. A back-up open sight is included and, should another sight be preferred, one can be attached to the Picatinny rail instead of the Hensoldt.

PDW Mechanism

The PDW's mechanism is of the locked



breech variety and utilizes a short stroke gas piston and multi-lug rotating bolt head. Unlike the G36, the 7" barrel reverts to HK's famous polygonal profile and has six right hand twists to it, the terms "land" and "groove" not being appropriate here.

This form of barrel rifling is said to improve accuracy, extend barrel life and improve the bullet-to-bore gas seal. Given the reputation of the polygonally equipped P7, these are not unrealistic assumptions.

The rate of fire is 950 rpm. As yet there is no burst-fire option, but given the prevailing fashion, this will probably be an option later on.

New Cartridge

HK's new round is a rimless design, bottleneck configuration not unlike the FiveSeven from FN. The bullet is actually copper-plated steel, 4.65mm in diameter and weighs 25 grains. By comparison, a .22 LR bullet weighs around 40 grs., and a standard .223 tips the scales at 55 grs.

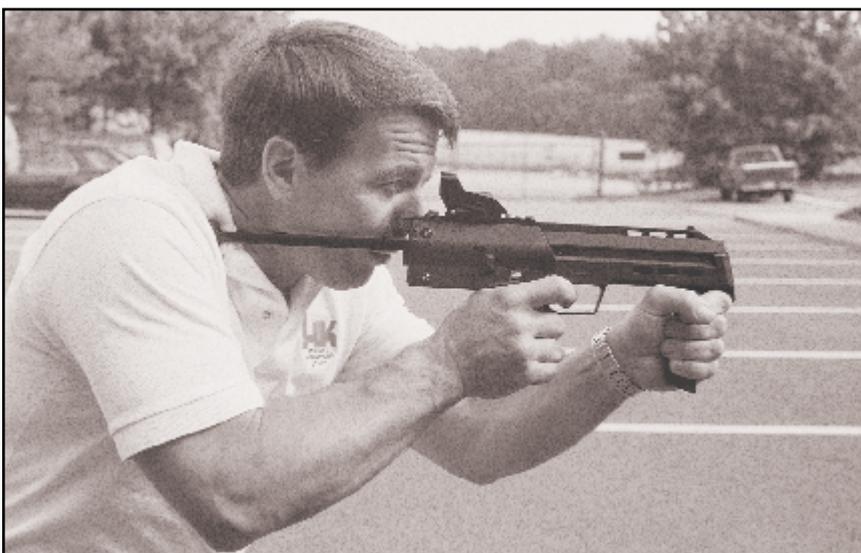
The real story is in the little zipster's performance. With the lighter bullet, the PDW demonstrates a muzzle velocity of just under 2,400 fps, equivalent to 312 ft/lbs, compared to 1,300 fps and 383 ft/lbs for a 9mm or 2,600 fps and 943 ft/lbs for .223 fired from an M4 carbine.

The real pay-off is the terminal ballistics. The combination of a steel bullet and "spooned" tip impart a great deal of trauma to a target, not to mention the penetration through standard battlefield Kevlar. It is clear that as far as currently available weapons are concerned, there is only one other platform that the PDW has to compete with— FN's equally radical 5.7mm P90 PDW, also aimed at the second echelon trooper or spec ops user.

According to available data, the PDW, which weighs half as much as the FN number, will give the P90 a run for its money, if not actually outperform it. In head-to-head testing, the combination of a steel bullet and a tumble-inducing asymmetrical tip outperforms the Herstal round, especially when the target is protected.

For example, at 50 meters the PDW penetrates 20 percent further in ballistic gelatin. Firing through a NATO standard armor of 1.6mm titanium and 20 layers of Kevlar, the 4.6mm round penetrates 15 cm as opposed to 7 cm for the 5.7mm's steel-tipped round; the PDW will still penetrate a NATO level Ti/Kevlar shield at 200m, as opposed to only 140m for the P90. Reportedly, the PDW will also easily penetrate a double thickness of the latest Russian infantry body armor at combat ranges.

Such performances will guarantee a healthy military market for the HK PDW. As they used to say in their ads, "In a world of compromise, some men don't."





STEALTH DRAW

There Are Times When Being Able To Sneak Your Gun Out Undetected Can Save Your Life. Here Are Some Street-Proven Tricks.

By Massad Ayoob

The ability to use stealth and intelligence to gain the upper hand on an opponent, and hopefully control an impending fight before anyone gets hurt, is the essence of street smarts. It's what I call "weaselcraft" and one of the most important tactics involves a surreptitious draw. I want my gun in my hand when a dangerous situation presents itself, but not at the expense of betraying to my opponent that I am armed. I want the element of surprise. Let's look at some examples, all of them proven in the real world.

SNEAKING THE HAND TO THE GUN



I hate that word "sneak" because it has connotations that rightfully belong more to the bad guy than the good guy. But, sometimes, making ready in "stealth mode" is the best thing to do. An overt movement can "frighten the horses," give people the wrong idea about who is a danger to whom, and can even turn a situation that was escapable



without bloodshed into lethal violence. Let's look at one example.

The officer is one of three responding to a report of a crowd of threatening thugs. They want this resolved without bloodshed, but some of these punks are known to be armed. It's a cold, windy autumn day, and the officer in question has his long coat on. The side pockets are cut away to reach his holstered handgun.

As the approach begins, he surreptitiously shoves his hands into what looks like his pockets, but his right hand is firmly around the stocks of his Colt service revolver. Contact is made.

In an instant, the balloon goes up. Guns come out. This officer's weapon comes swiftly into play, jack-knifing the most dangerous of the opponents, a man reputed to be a stone-killer who is in the act of reaching for an assault rifle. That done, the officer turns to his left and nails a man who's firing a Smith & Wesson revolver at a brother officer. In moments, it is over: three offenders dead, two officers wounded, the officer in question unscathed.

The story is true. The officer was Wyatt

Earp, and the incident was the one that took place near the OK Corral in Tombstone, Ariz. There have been countless variations of this epic gunfight published by historians, but most agree that Earp had his hand on the butt of his .45 caliber Single Action Army when the fight began, and reached through his pocket before the shooting started to acquire that drawing grasp. His first bullet folded Frank McLaury before he could unlimber the Winchester lever action rifle he was trying to bring into action against the Earp party, and then Earp shot Billy Clanton.

For many years, NYPD "reefer coats," the long winter uniform overcoats, were made with gun-slits in the pockets so officers could access their holstered .38 Specials in just the same way. I have a modern police uniform foul-weather coat that is so equipped.

What about the private citizen, or for that matter the plainclothes officer? There are several ways the hand can be on the holstered gun beforehand without flagging to everyone watching that you are holding a firearm. With a shoulder holster, a simple

folding of the arms allows the gun arm to be inside the jacket, hand on pistol, covered from all but the most discerning eye by the overlapping free arm. Something similar can be done with a cross-draw holster.

Most of us carry behind the strong side hip. That's harder to reach without people noticing. If there is no one behind you who is dangerous or likely to misunderstand what you're doing, you can turn your strong side hip back away from the threat. Now, bring both arms in as if you were putting your hands on your hips. Some see this as a body language gesture of hostility, while others read it merely as expressing exasperation. If your gun hand comes up under the bottom edge of the concealing garment, however, it can take a drawing grasp on the holstered sidearm.

Why is this so important? It roughly cuts in half the time it takes to respond, draw and fire. Most of us take about 1.5 seconds to draw, fire and hit at seven yards with our hands clear of the holstered weapon. Add at least a half a second to that if you are wearing your gun concealed, as you probably will be in real life. However, with the hand already on the holstered gun and gripping it firmly, the part of the draw that requires fine motor skills is done and only the part that needs simple gross motor skills remains. You should be able to rip the gun up, bring it on target and break the shot in under a second.

The Ankle Draw



When accessed from a standing position, the ankle holster is hampered by a notoriously slow draw. However, when the user is seated or knocked to the ground, the placement of a gun now comes into its own.

The Southern police officer has read my article on backup guns, and one part in particular has hit home. I had mentioned that when seated behind a steering

BELLY DRAW



A small handgun in a belly band holster lends itself beautifully to a surreptitious draw. The 4" elastic strap with "holster pocket" is best placed right at belt level, with the gun butt forward just to the weak-hand side of centerline. Now you can drop your hands as if grasping your stomach, a common body language gesture of helpless surrender and weakness that is enhanced if you can drop your shoulders and try to make your face look shocked.

The hand is inside the shirt, already on the gun, all concealed by your forearms. You're ready to make a fast and deadly draw if you have to, and you look like a crumpling victim.

wheel and seat-belted in place, the ankle gun is often easier to reach than the hip holster. He has noted that he can't draw his duty gun from its SS-III security holster while seated and belted behind the wheel of the patrol car.

He buys a Colt Agent .38 snub and a good ankle rig, and gets into the habit of letting his hand drift to it when someone he doesn't trust approaches his parked police car.

He does that on the night in question, because the man wearing a long coat in hot weather looks agitated as he comes up to the cruiser. Suddenly, a sawed-off shotgun flashes from under the coat, and blooms roaring flame.

The cop jerks his head away in time to save his life and eyesight, though he will be disfigured for life from his wounds. His hand is already holding the ankle holstered Colt, and before the gunman can cycle another shell into the chamber, the cop empties the .38 into him. The cop will survive and return to full duty. The offender, horribly crippled, will get a long sentence for the attempted murder of a police officer.

Make sure your pant legs are loose enough to allow you access to the ankle rig. A good thing about this holster is that if you're flexible enough, you can reach it

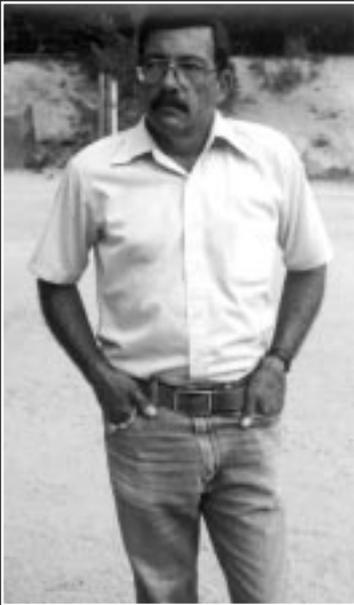


with either hand if you have been disarmed of your primary weapon or manacled.

I don't like safety straps on ankle holsters. Most so fitted rely solely on the strap to hold the gun in place, and can be accidentally released by running through brush or crossing your ankles. I want a gun that is held friction-tight. This also allows a silent, surreptitious draw.

When the bad guy has his back turned and I'm stealthily reaching for my gun from an awkward position where I can barely reach it, this is really a lousy time for him to hear the snap of my safety strap releasing, or the rip of a strip of Velcro being cleared.

When you have to fire from awkward positions and can't bring the sights to the eyes, a laser unit comes into its own. This is one reason I like the Crimson Trace LaserGrips for my backup J-frame snubby.



Pocket Draw

For years, big-city investigators made a habit of putting their .38 snubbies in their overcoat pockets, in hand and in firing position, when they accosted suspicious persons. Generations of uniformed cops did the same thing with backup guns when weather allowed them to wear bulky uniform coats. In summer, a hand on a belly gun in a side trouser pocket came close to offering the same speed.

A New York cop is savvy about backup guns, and feels the pocket is the most sensible location for him. He goes from 4" on-duty and 2" off-duty, to both guns all the time. One winter night, his 4" S&W is buttoned under two coats and his 2" Colt in the coat pocket when he takes a subway ride. He's about to reach his stop when two muggers approach him, one with a knife, the other holding a .25 auto to his head.

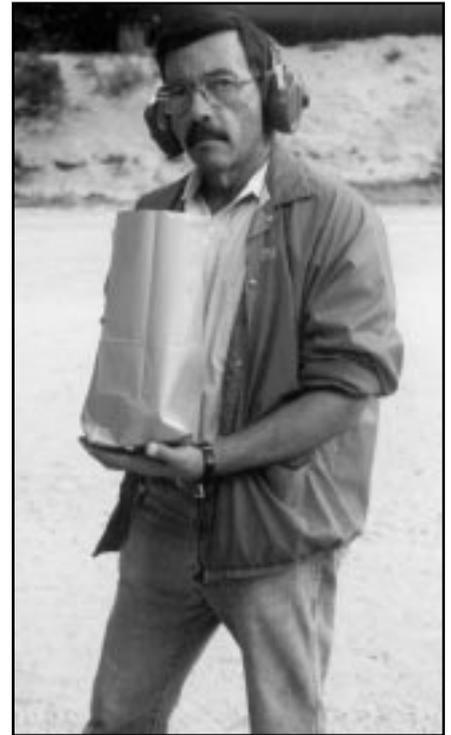
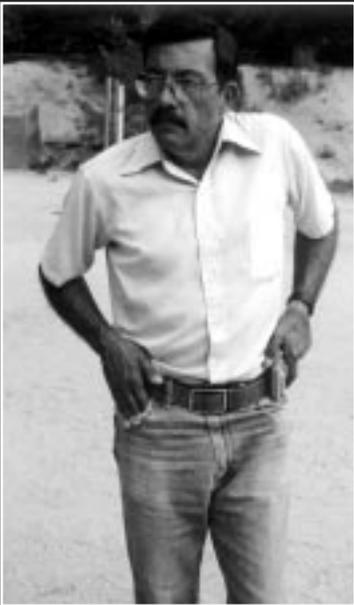
Feigning compliance as if reaching for his wallet, the cop snakes his hand into the coat pocket and takes a good grip on the .38 Detective Special. Then, in one smooth movement, he bats the suspect's .25 aside with his left hand, draws with the right, and shoots his antagonist in the head with the little Colt. The man collapses, killed instantly, just as the train pulls into its stop. His accomplice flees, to be captured, convicted and sentenced later. The officer is unharmed.

In a trouser pocket in particular, you want a good pocket holster. This will break up the outline of the gun, prevent sharp front sights from wearing through the trouser fabric, and orient the gun in the same place all the time. It will usually speed the draw.

There are several good pocket holsters on the market from the likes of Sparks, Alessi, Kramer and Rosen.

In a coat pocket, you have the option of firing right through the fabric at very close range. You'll want a shrouded hammer revolver like the S&W Bodyguard or Centennial for this. A conventional revolver's hammer spur or exposed firing pin can snag fabric and jam the gun, and an auto pistol doesn't guarantee more than one shot when fired from inside surrounding fabric.

Concealed Carry Clothiers makes a very nice concealment vest with a built-in pocket for a J-frame S&W or equivalent revolver.



The Bag Trick



A gun hidden inside a paper bag has been the staple defensive tactic of many a high-robbery-risk storekeeper when he went to the bank to make his deposits. When the bag is held close to the body, particularly in a public place where there are stores and people are all over the place carrying bags with their purchases, no one looks twice.

The Asian couple had immigrated to America and settled in California. They worked hard and prospered. They learned

quickly that there was violence here. The husband bought a short-barrel .357 Magnum revolver to protect his store.

The night came when he was in the back room and heard suspicious sounds out front. He took his gun and put it in a paper bag, and sauntered casually out. There he saw to his horror the armed robbers who were terrorizing his wife. They turned toward him, and dropped their guard when they saw he was holding only a paper bag.

It was their last mistake. Sheets of orange flame exploded from the bag. One robber died before he could pull his trigger. The other got off a shot that slightly wounded the storekeeper, and then a bullet from the magnum tore his life away before he could fire again. It ended with both gunmen dead, and the husband and wife safely and completely recovering from minor injuries. The double homicide was ruled justifiable by the authorities.

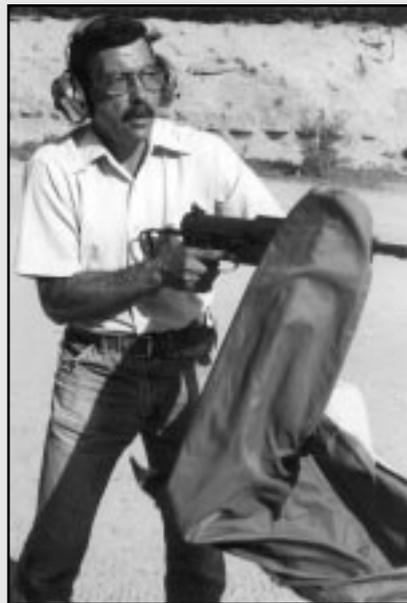


The most effective way to use the “paper bag trick” is to take a new one that is still crisp with some body to it, and make a roughly half-length slit low in one side. The hand holding the revolver goes through the slit. (The close confines of the bag could compromise the operation of an auto pistol, especially if anything else is in the bag with it.)

If you need “urban camo,” a newspaper inserted upright into the bag will do nicely. Unless it’s the Sunday New York Times and you’re shooting a mousegun or pre-fragmented projectiles, you shouldn’t deflect your outgoing bullets.

The support hand should be under the bag as if holding it with something heavy inside. If you need to fire, make sure the support hand contacts the firing hand, if only to keep it out of the path of your own bullets! This is one time you can make use of the otherwise obsolete “cup and saucer” hold, as illustrated in the photos.

You’ll also have to “point-shoot” from here, since the bag blocks the sights and raising the arms to eye level will lift the bag high enough to block the target from your view.



Coat Over Arm

If you have a coat you’ll look natural enough with it draped over your arm. A handgun held in your fist, with your fingers wrapped around frame and cylinder or frame and slide, will now be no longer than an arm with extended fingers, and the draping coat hides it all. No, the gun isn’t in firing position, but it is drawn and readily accessible. A snub .38 could be held in firing position here, but the muzzle will be pointing at everyone around you and responsible people don’t do that with a gun in firing position.

Bad guys do this all the time with sawed-off shotguns. Good guy executive protection specialists are known to do it with folded-stock submachineguns. The gun is held by the fore-end in the weak hand when done by the good guys. A flip of the arm clears the coat, and the free dominant hand can go to a firing position. This is not something I’d recommend for the average person, but it’s good to be aware of when scouting out potential dangerous felons.

I hope you’ll never need the stealth draw, but if you ever do need it, I hope you can bring it off. Use common sense, and train for anything you think you’ll ever have to do.





COMBAT HANDGUN RETENTION

By Steve Tarani
Photos by Ichiro Nagata

WHAT ARE THE FOUR STAGES OF COMBAT HANDGUN RETENTION? HOW WOULD YOU HANDLE SOMEONE BIGGER AND STRONGER WHO GOT HIS HANDS ON YOUR WEAPON? WHAT IF THAT PERSON WAS A "NO-SHOOT" SUBJECT?



The science of handgun retention provides training to deal with the various conditions in which either a combatant or a non-combatant attempts to get their hands on your sidearm—a “gun grab” in street parlance. This can occur before, during or after it’s out of your holster.

The worst scenario is when you attempt to draw your handgun in a justifiable defensive shooting situation and out of the clear blue sky comes a pair of hands clamping down on your gun. Now you have a life-threatening circumstance and can’t bring your weapon into play. As terrifying as that concept may be, one must be prepared to handle that probability, especially in today’s prevailing climate of aggressive criminal behavior.

The most common reaction to being startled or shocked is to freeze. The knees bend and the center of gravity lowers slightly as the head moves forward. This is commonly referred to in the law enforcement training community as the classic “Frozen Foot Syndrome.”

Recall a time when you were scared out of your wits suddenly by a loud, unexpected crash in your immediate vicinity. Odds are your primal response was most likely—even though it may have been only for a split second—frozen feet.

Aside from the initial shock of surprise, there are four distinct stages of combat handgun retention. Before discussing actual weapon-retention techniques, your best defense against a gun grab always

begins with a rock-solid shooting platform. Your shooting platform should be stable. Whether you shoot from an Isosceles or Weaver, the key is that your feet should be planted solidly and your base strong and well-balanced for shot placement.

The second defense to a gun grab is your grip. The handgun should be gripped firmly with full contact of the entire palm and fingers wrapped around the frame or stocks, with the web of the shooting hand firmly pressing up against the tang as close as possible to the bore line.

This accomplishes two basic objectives: It allows a well-placed shot, and you’ve got enough tension in your grip to execute a combat handgun-retention maneuver in a contact engagement.



NON-CONTACT

A non-contact engagement takes place when you have your handgun drawn to the guard or on target and you observe someone approaching your muzzle with the intention to wrestle your handgun away from you. However, there is no physical contact made, and you have plenty of time to get away.

There are several solutions to solving a non-contact engagement. Since there is distance between you and your would-be gun grabber as well as no physical contact, you are free to move your body and

arms. The best movement is down and away from your attacker's hands and 45 degrees to your strong side.

The most common mistake people make in the face of a frontal attack is to move straight backward. This is a highly ineffective technique in that someone who is running forward always has the advantage over someone who is running in reverse. Your best option is to step off the line of attack on a 45-degree angle. This will force your opponent to turn and re-face your position, which buys you time

and opportunity to reassume a strong shooting stance.

The time you gained by moving away from the line of attack also allows you to assess additional data input from your internal Combat Information Center, such as the identification of your attacker. What if it's your baby daughter yelling "Daddy, what's going on!" and she wasn't grabbing for your gun, but for the safety of your arms? A definite no-shoot subject, and you're grateful that you took the time to train for a non-contact engagement.





CONTACT

A contact engagement takes place when someone has actually made physical contact with your drawn handgun with the intention of wresting it away from your hands. There are only two conditions and three positions of study in this, the second stage of combat handgun retention.

The first condition is that your opponent is successful in achieving a single-handed grab on your handgun. The second condition is that your opponent has successfully gained a two-handed secured grip on your handgun.

Fortunately, solutions to the double-handed grab are the same as the single-handed grab, but may require a bit more effort to execute.

The first position in which your opponent can obtain a single- or double-handed grip is to the starboard, or ejection-port side, in the case of a semiauto. The second position is a port-side grab. The final and most startling is dead center, right up front and personal, with either one or two hands vice-gripped to the barrel or slide of your handgun.

For either a port or starboard side grab from either a single- or double-handed, maintain your strong shooting platform and solid grip. Now, pivot your upper body in the opposite direction of the grab while pulling the handgun down in a half-moon motion. This sudden movement will violently yank at your attacker's grip, and he will be attempting to use the small muscles in his thumbs and fingers to hold up your entire body's weight. The solution for both port and starboard side positions is the same, and it requires very little training to master these half-moon, gross motor skills.

The third and ugliest of the three contact engagement positions is dead-on your centerline, right in front of the muzzle. If he is a shootable subject and your particular weapon is not immobilized by his grip— in some cases, certain handguns may fail to fire, like if a 1911 slide is bumped out of battery— then simply execute a full trigger press. The best weapon retention technique, the one that works 100 percent of the time, is to simply shoot the bastard off the end of your gun.

If shooting the person is not an

option, you've got a couple of failsafe alternatives. The first is what is called "Step Back and Kneel" (SBK). Simply step back and kneel on one knee while jerking back violently with your gun. This sudden rearward movement and change in elevation will violently yank at your attacker's grip, and he will be attempting to use the small muscles in his thumbs and fingers to hold up your entire body's weight.

Another technique is what is known as the "Knee Escape." This is used if the assailant is pushing straight down on your muzzle, toward the ground forcefully with both hands. Maintain your strong

grip and good shooting platform. Next, take the knee closest to your attacker, raise it up near your elbow and slide it quickly down the side your forearm, as if scratching a mosquito bite with the inside of your knee. Slide your knee past your grip and to the slide, slamming into his wrist as you pull up with both your hands. Be very careful not to cover your own knee with your muzzle.

At the conclusion of both the SBK and knee escape techniques, it is highly recommended to again step off 45 degrees to the line of attack to ensure that the assailant does not regain his grip on your handgun.





PRESENTATION

A presentation engagement occurs right when you are smack in mid-draw. Your handgun is neither fully drawn nor seated firmly in your holster. You are caught somewhere in between. This is the weakest link in the

chain of drawing your handgun into the guard or up on target.

There are only two directions you can go from here— either you slam the gun back into the holster, something an attacker really wouldn't expect, and pivot your body away, again using your legs against his hands or you continue your draw stroke into one of the half-moons as previously described. Your retention response will be determined by his attack position: starboard, port or muzzle.

HOLSTERED

A holstered engagement is the most common for police, and it occurs when your weapon is still in the holster and someone is trying to claw it out. You may or may not have your own hand on your gun at this stage.

If you have your hands on your gun and your gun is in the holster, you want to keep it there. Most likely, his hands are grabbing on top of your hands, and all that is necessary is to pivot your body away on a 45-degree angle of movement while maintaining pressure on your gun.

The other scenario is that he has his hands on your gun and it is still in the holster. Your best move is to slam both your hands on top of his and violently jerk your body down and away, pivoting 45 degrees, back and away from your attacker.

Regardless of your solution, be sure not to fall into the old “running backwards technique.” Someone running forward will eventually overcome someone running backwards.

These techniques and training positions are designed in a logical manner so as to facilitate training in combat handgun retention. Stages one through four should be practiced in that order of progression, so as to develop muscle memory response in order of effectiveness based on position.

The secret to reactive response is practice—practice with reality. The number of repetitions you do in training will equal how well you perform under pressure.

It is highly suggested that you practice these techniques with a training partner using an inert or “red gun.” Be sure that your partner is wearing thick leather gloves and you are careful not to rip your training partner’s thumbs and fingers off his hand during training. These techniques have been proven in the field, and with a little practice, your odds on handling a combat handgun-retention situation increase dramatically. 

Steve Tarani teaches the Universal Weapon Retention course at Gunsite as well as POST-certified classes for law enforcement agencies across the United States. He is currently available for both law enforcement and civilian training seminars and can be reached via www.edgedefense.com or by calling (949) 252-1962.



CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON



How To Select A Fighting Knife

By Steve Tarani

As a full-time professional edged weapons instructor within both the law enforcement and civilian training communities, no matter where I'm instructing around the globe, the two most common questions that continually emerge are: "What is the best blade out there?" and "How do I know what's the best knife for me?"

In the same way the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates answered his students' questions with a question, the modern student of the blade must answer his own questions with a question. "What exactly am I going to use the knife for? Am I going to use my knife as a utility blade? As a self-defense weapon? Perhaps a combination of utility and self-defense?"

You've probably heard the old saying, "Necessity is the mother of invention." Well, it happens to be especially true in the world of knives. A fisherman needs a different knife than a box-top opener who needs a different knife than a sushi chef who needs a different knife than a Navy SEAL. It's all a matter of application.

Only after you've answered the question, "What exactly am I going to use this knife for?" can you go to the next step in



choosing the best knife for you.

There are two general classifications of blade types available for the prospective buyer— the fixed and the folder.

A fixed blade can be defined as any pointed or sharp, single- or double-edged blade secured to a fixed handle. Examples of a fixed blade would be the classic Bowie Knife, Scottish dirk, K-Bar or the classic Rondel dagger. Even a broken piece of glass or prison shank with duct tape wrapped around for a handle would classify as a fixed blade.

A folding blade can be defined as any pointed or sharp, single- or double-edged blade which in any way can be folded, coiled, bent or otherwise secured in such a fashion as to be rendered disabled in the “folded” position. Examples of a folding blade would be a Swiss Army knife, Boy Scout knife, Buck 110 or a combat folder. Automatics also qualify as folding blades.

Folding blades can be further broken down into three identifying categories: mechanically-operated, gravity-operated and spring-assisted or automatic. There are also other categories such as ballistic knives and throwing knives, but for purposes of general application we will limit





Above, this is a great box opener, but a lousy combat knife. There is no way to thrust or stab, the most important of all knife fighting techniques.

our discourse to the above categories.

If you're looking for a mechanically operated folding knife, a plethora of opening mechanisms is available for your selection. Some blades are enabled via manipulation of an opening mechanism using the thumb, such as a hole, stud, T-post, pin post, indents, groves or pocket catches.

These types of mechanically operated folding knives are generally offered with either spine or ridge-lock, liner-lock, slide-lock or bolt-lock securing systems.

If you're looking for a gravity-operated knife, you generally have only a few options. Mainstream availability of the origin of the Balisong and tri-fold make these the most common. Some historians have traced the Balisong back to the Philippines. "Bali" means "broken" and "soug" means "bone," which is taken in translation to mean a "knife hidden in a broken bone." This knife is sometimes referred to as a "butterfly knife." Both the Balisong and Tri-fold are available in a multitude of different blade styles and lengths.

Due to the majority of state and federal laws governing edged weapons, there aren't too many automatics available to the general public. In certain states, no one can own a "switchblade," while other states allow only law enforcement and military the right of ownership.

Real-World Testing

The most commonly carried blade is the combat folder. There are a few key points (no pun intended) to consider when selecting a combat folder.

The knife's ergonomics should fit your





Above, a classic saber grip on a Spyderco Police Model. Note that the edge is pointed toward the adversary.

defensive training. If you intend to use your combat folder to thrust, then it better have a rock-solid forefinger and thumb stop as part of the handle at the base of the blade.

Some combat folders lack adequate forefinger and thumb stops, which could result in grip slippage during a forceful thrust. These stops must additionally fit your fingers comfortably. If your hands are sweaty, bloody or under water, you don't want your hand slipping down the razor edge. Additionally, a curved or hooked tip may not be the best design for thrusting.

A good test of a combat folder's thrusting suitability is to stab the tip repeatedly into a used tire. Secure the tire for safety before you begin practice. If you feel your grip loosening, then back off on power. Observe the performance of your knife in your hand. Does it feel comfortable in your fingers and the heel of your palm? Does it appear that the blade, locking mechanism and handle can take additional repetitive thrusting?

While the thrust is the most basic knife-fighting technique, slashing is also an important skill. Use a cardboard box or length of rope to test the suitability of your blade design for slashing and hacking.

There are countless blade shapes, thicknesses and bevels. Some are pointed, others are curved and still others are recurved. For example, the number of bevels on an edge determines the coefficient of friction (amount of drag) generated during a chop, thrust or slash.

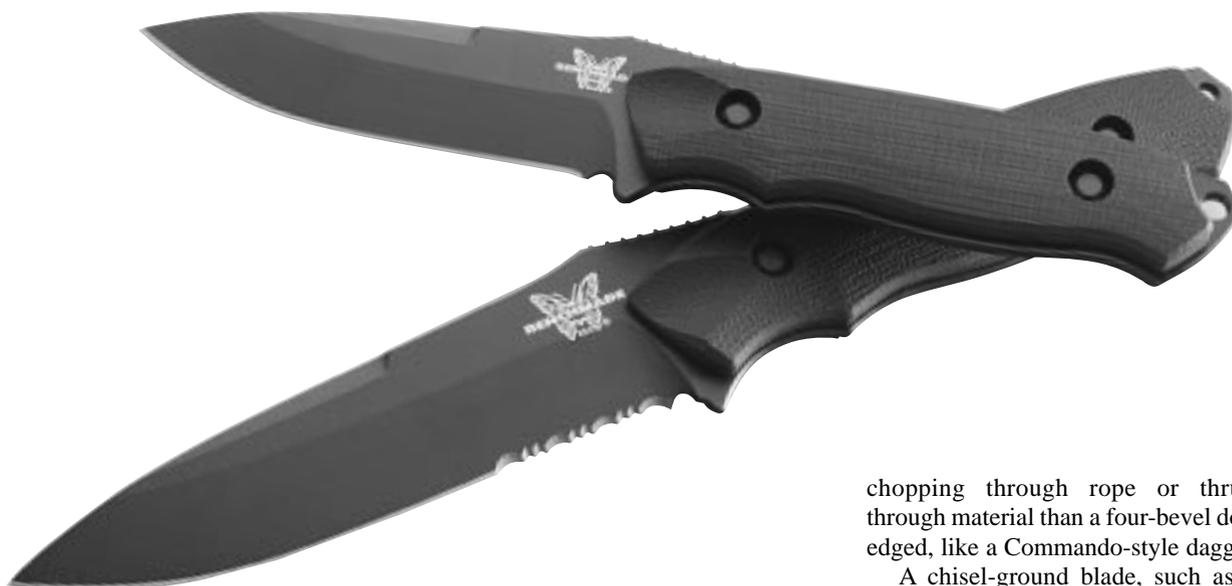
Typically, a single-bevel or chisel-ground edge demonstrates less friction on



A fixed blade is "better" than a folder for combat because there are no moving parts to bend or break. However, the reality is that a fixed blade is harder to carry discreetly and today's modern folders from the likes of Emerson and Benchmade are as rugged as the rock of Gibraltar. These fixed blades are from custom maker Greg Lightfoot.



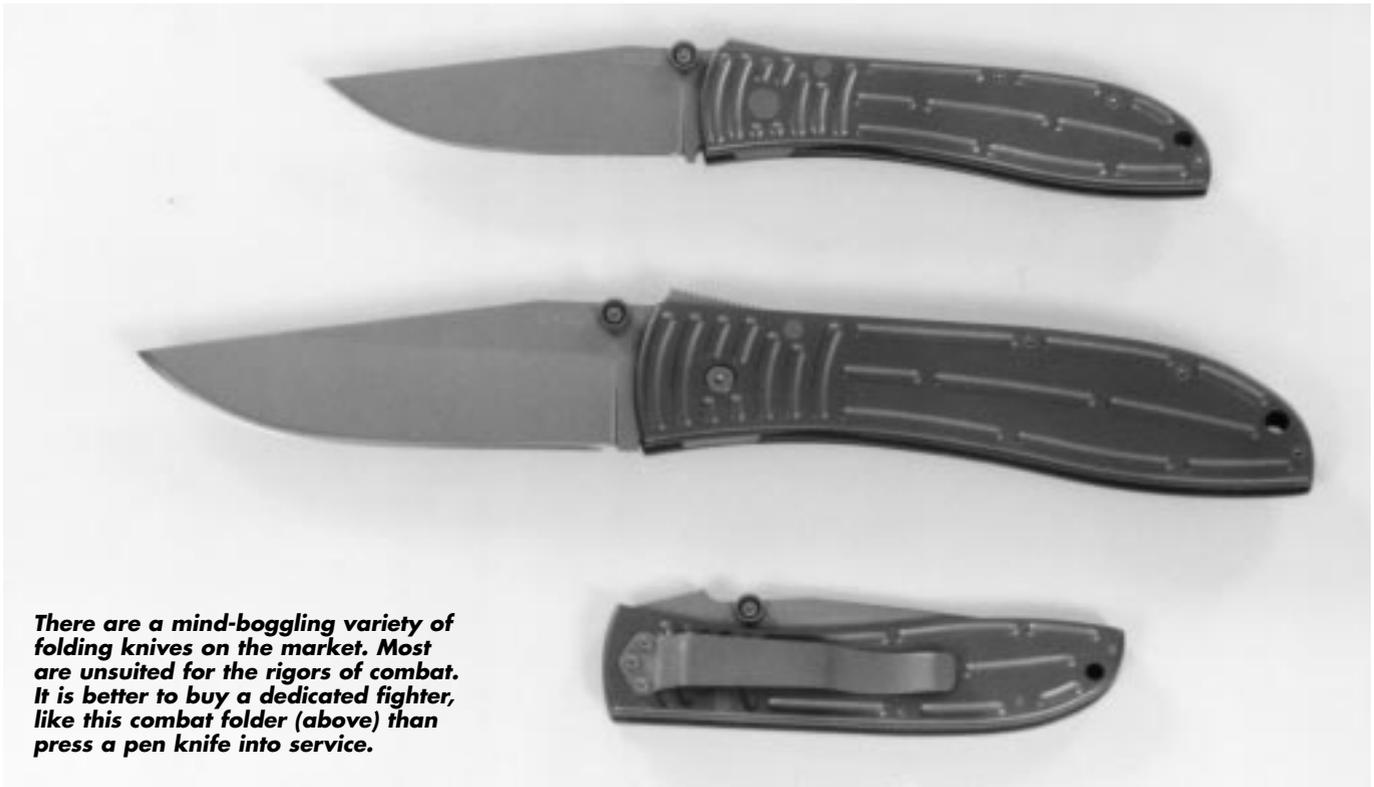
We've got one word to say about the fighters shown here- ergonomics. The blades at top are of similar configuration to the Benchmades below, but note the difference in the handles. Thin and slippery are not good qualities in a hardcore knife! The Benchmades have a finger groove and a serrated area for the thumb, both designed to prevent the hand from sliding down in the blade if a thrust hits a hard surface, like a skull.



chopping through rope or thrusting through material than a four-bevel double-edged, like a Commando-style dagger.

A chisel-ground blade, such as Phill Hartsfield's Yoroï Toshi-styled Kwaiken or Kozuka models, has one-half the drag of a conventional double-ground blade. It has between a quarter and a sixth the drag of a double-edged dagger, as a result of fewer surfaces causing friction as the blade penetrates and the fact that the blade width does not increase in size from the point to the hilt during insertion. However, the advantage and disadvantage of blade type is again determined by its intended functionality.

Once you've answered the questions of design functionality, performance, comfort and practical application, all that remains is what's pleasing to your eye. There are a number of blade finishes,



There are a mind-boggling variety of folding knives on the market. Most are unsuited for the rigors of combat. It is better to buy a dedicated fighter, like this combat folder (above) than press a pen knife into service.



colors and handle materials available to increase your options in selecting what's most aesthetically pleasing.

At the end of the day, choosing what blade you carry is as personal as choosing what clothes you wear. It needs to fit your hand. It needs to fit your style. It needs to fit within the regulations of your state laws. However, above all, it needs to fit your answer to, "What exactly am I  going to use this knife for?"

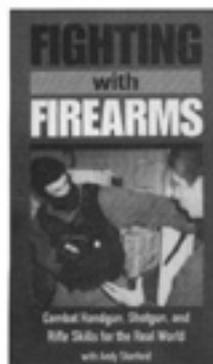
Steve Tarani is director of weapons training for Edge Defense and Control of California and Senior Edged Weapons instructor for Gunsite Training Center in Arizona. He is currently available for both law enforcement and civilian training seminars and can be reached via www.edgedefense.com or by calling (949) 252-1962.



Spyderco brought the one-hand opening feature to market along with the pocket clip. Today every combat folder on the market has a version of these two features.

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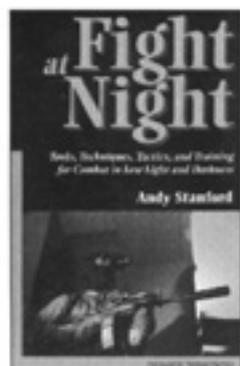


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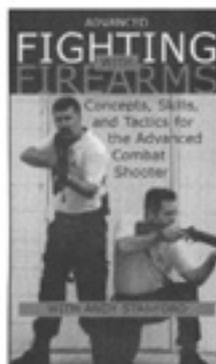


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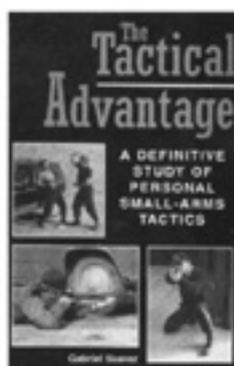


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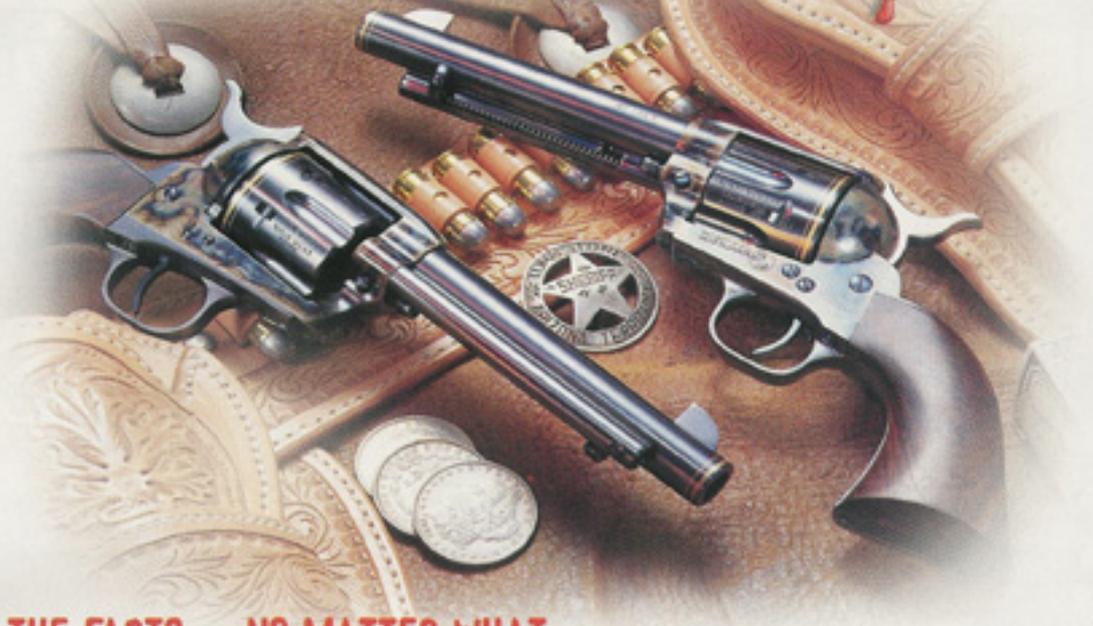
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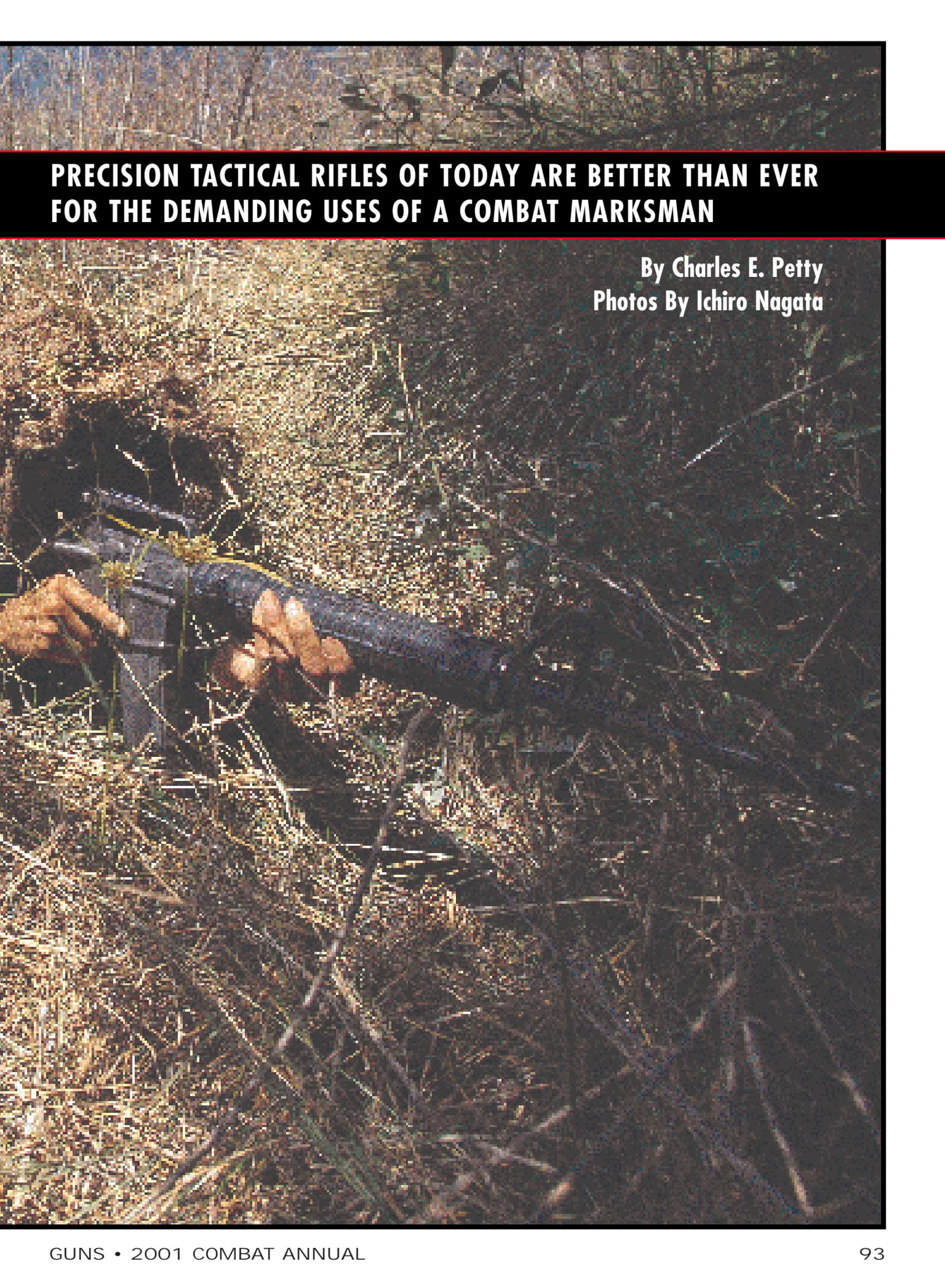


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COUNTERSNIPER

TECHNOLOGY



A high-contrast, grainy photograph of a combat marksman in a field of tall, dry grass. The marksman is wearing a dark, tactical uniform and is holding a rifle, aiming it towards the right side of the frame. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on the grass and the marksman's hands, while the rest of the scene is in deep shadow. The overall mood is serious and focused.

**PRECISION TACTICAL RIFLES OF TODAY ARE BETTER THAN EVER
FOR THE DEMANDING USES OF A COMBAT MARKSMAN**

**By Charles E. Petty
Photos By Ichiro Nagata**



Sniper rifles date back to the 18th century when German and Swiss immigrants brought to America their knowledge of gunsmithing. The result was the so-called Kentucky rifle which included many features of the “jaeger rifle,” well known in central Europe for its accuracy. Units composed of sharpshooters began to appear in European armies around this time (1720), but it was the Revolutionary War that brought forth the first military snipers in America. These Pennsylvania-style rifles were accurate to 200 yards.

While Lord Horatio Nelson may be the most famous sniping victim of all time—he was killed on the deck of his flagship by a French Marine perched high in the rigging of his ship—the practice of targeting specific individuals, usually officers, did not gain widespread acceptance on the battlefield until the Civil War. The Confederacy, with its rich tradition of hunting, perfected the art of sniping to a far greater degree than the Union forces. The Whitworth rifle, favored by Reb



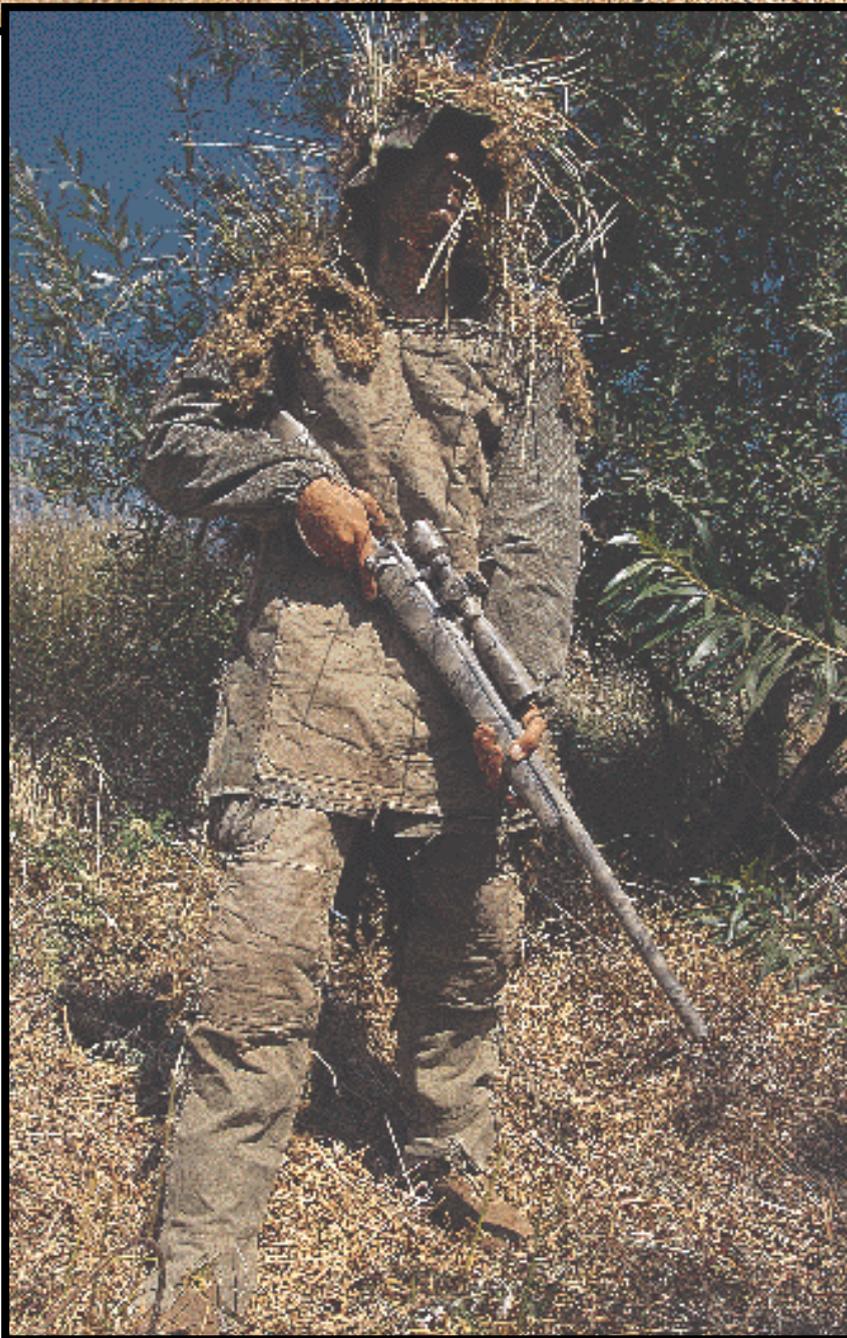
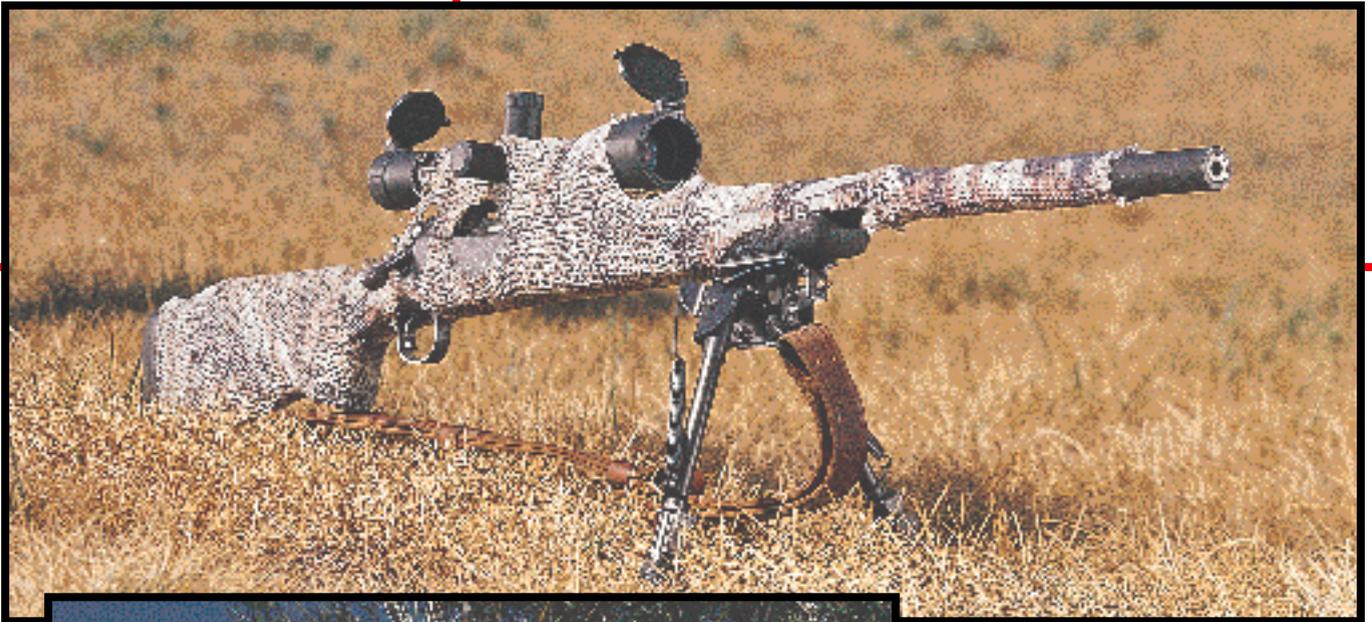
marksmen, was accurate to 800 yards.

Sniping continued to evolve on the battlefield, through the Boer War, both World Wars, Korea, Vietnam, the Falklands, right through the .50 BMG Barretts deployed in Desert Storm. Today's sniper rifles are capable of hitting a target out as far as two miles, but wind drift and other atmospheric conditions make such shots more a matter of luck than skill. Indeed, the accuracy capability of today's sniper rifles is exceeded by the limitations of human sight and the vagaries of old Mother Nature.

Modern law enforcement has also adopted the specialized rifle and there is a thriving business supplying them. Of course these are often the same as the military rifles, but when you consider that the average SWAT rifle shot is less than 100 yards, there's really little justification for duplicating all the military equipment.

The problem is that the two missions—military and police—are not at all alike and usually require different tools. In a military setting, the ability to pick off specially selected targets has both a tactical and psychological value. The 7.62 NATO (.308 Win.) is the standard cartridge used in the Army's M24 sniper rifle, but some special units use





much heavier stuff such as the .300 Win. Mag., Remington .300 Ultra Mag, or the .338 Lapua Mag.

Urban law enforcement has little need for magnum calibers. One could argue that no law enforcement agency has justification for a long range offensive weapon, but it's hard to argue with sizzle. It sells more guns than "need" and affluent SWAT teams often buy gear because military special forces have the same thing. It seems there is a high degree of keeping up with the Joneses. One trainer quipped, "Testosterone is real high in this business."

But there is surely such a thing as too much gear. On the TV news not long ago, a SWAT team was taking positions against a barricaded suspect. One poor SWAT rifleman was running— completely exposed— across a wide, grassy area. He was carrying one of those huge rifle cases and it was almost all he could do to keep it off the ground, let alone run a six second 40. Lord knows what all he had in there, but it was too much gear.

Perhaps because of the load factor, there seems to be a trend away from long barrels and adjustable stocks toward shorter barrels and simpler stocks. A short-barreled rifle can easily be slung like a backpack, leaving both hands free and the spotter can easily carry everything else they need in a small backpack. There are good rifles with folding stocks and precision takedown systems that could easily be carried in a gym bag should a clandestine approach be required.

Accuracy Requirements

Want to start an argument? Enter into a discussion of the accuracy require-



ments for a tactical rifle. Someone will surely proclaim that nothing less than a half-minute is acceptable, while another expert might declare that anything over a quarter-minute is very nearly akin to throwing rocks.

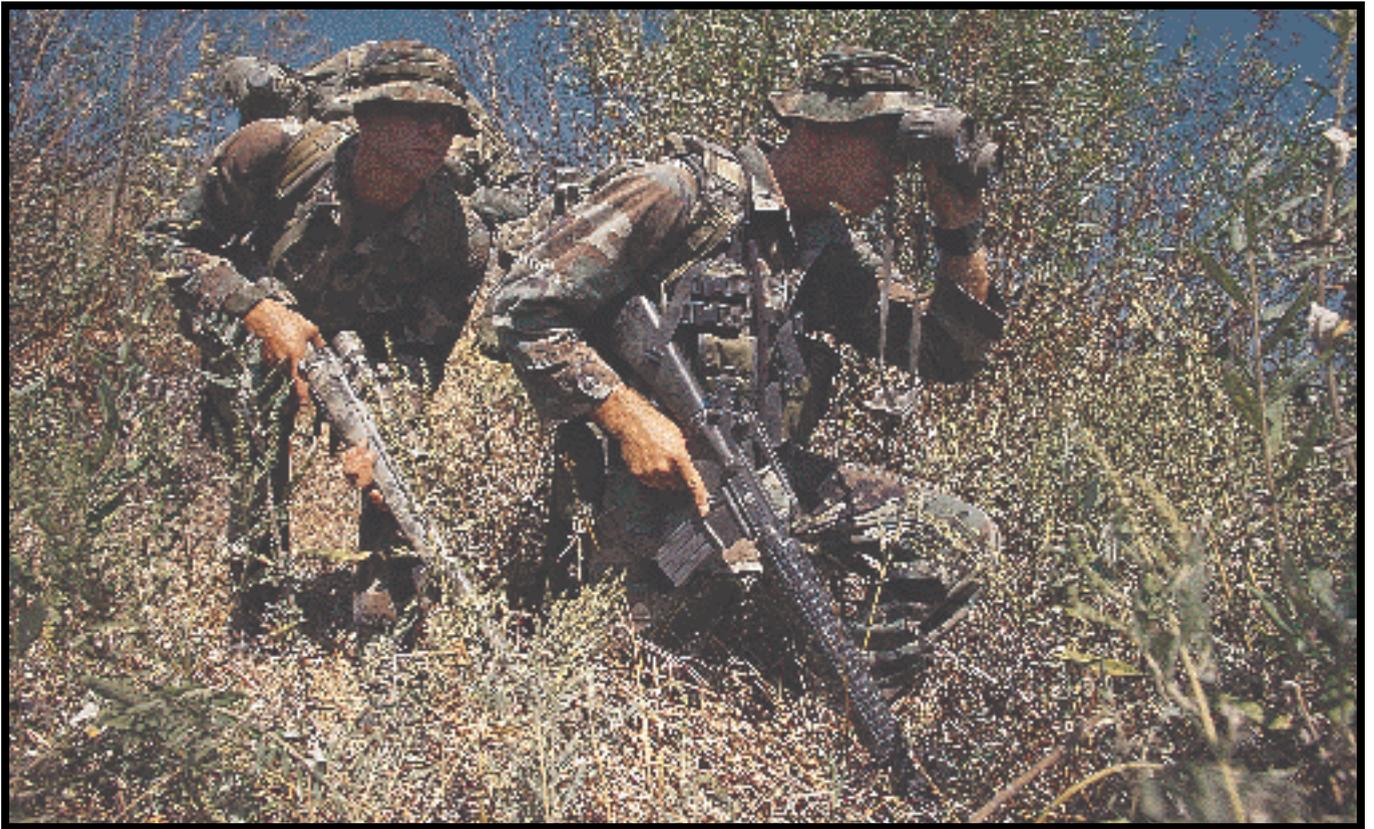
A minute of angle is 1.05" at 100 yards, but for practical purposes, 1" is usually stated as the value. The progression is linear: 200 yards is 2", 300 yards is 3", 1000 yards is 10". While it is surely possible to get rifles to shoot a half-minute and even, occasionally, to group into a quarter-minute, the reality is that wind conditions, range estimation and other variables such as barometric pressure can more than offset such an intrinsic accuracy advantage.

Good factory match ammo, such as Federal's 168 gr. Match load in .308, the standard sniper load, is available, but it is unrealistic to think that a gun and ammo combination is capable of that every day. Shooters aren't either.

Now let's look at what that really means. Groups are always measured from center-to-center of the two widest holes. As a practical matter, a 1/2 MOA group with a .30 caliber projectile will probably be one hole. These are measured by taking the widest dimension and subtracting the bullet diameter. A 1/4 MOA group is going to be a tiny one-holer.

To put it another way, a 1/2 MOA group will fit inside the target's cornea, but a 1/4 MOA group will fit inside the pupil. Are either of these realistic goals for a tactical





rifle? Not really. On the other hand, a gun that shoots more than 1 MOA is usually considered to be unacceptable.

Accuracy is surely desirable, but most of the time you pay dearly for it. There are several rifles that will shoot from 3/4 to 1 MOA routinely that can be bought for around \$1,000. But if you want to step up to 1/2 MOA, you will pay double, triple or even more, just for the rifle, scope extra. So it really becomes a matter of cost/benefit analysis.

The average rifle shot in law enforce-

ment is 97 yards. If the shooter knows that he can surgically place a bullet no further than 1/2" from his point-of-aim at 100 yards, he should be comfortable and confident. Most trainers with whom I've spoken suggest that the MOA consideration should be extended to 200 and 300 yards. Their logic is impeccable— long range accuracy is a big confidence builder. Even though a police sniper will probably never be called on to do it, it's good to know that you can hit where you want at 300.

It is not too hard to teach someone the

basic principles of position, trigger and breath control, but it takes a lot of experience to learn to read the nuances of wind, light and weather. This takes a lot of trigger time and raises the issue of training. Few police departments can afford to have their special purpose units train on a daily, or even weekly, basis.

In all but the largest departments, SWAT trained officers have other jobs, such as answering calls for service, and they're lucky to get half a day a month for training.





REMINGTON

Knowledgeable sources estimate that Remington's Model 700P, a "police version" of the classic Model 700, with a match barrel, H-S Precision stock and matte black finish, owns a staggering 75 percent of the police market. Greg Foster, Remington's Law Enforcement specialist, said, "We cannot make 700Ps fast enough."

The reason is simple—the 700P in .308 comes out of the box ready to shoot sub-MOA groups with good ammo. Most I've shot—and there have been several—happily shot 3/4 minute. Our editor-in-chief has owned two—one shot 1/2 minute and the other 1/3 minute. It doesn't get any better than that, especially at a price that most shooters consider to be a bargain.

The 700 Police is a 9 lb. rifle (without scope) with a 26" barrel. It is available in .223 Rem., .308 Win., .300 Win. Mag. and .300 Rem. Ultra Mag. The composite stock is made from a kevlar-fiberglass material and includes pillar bedding blocks.

One of the easiest ways to identify a 700P is to look for the dual sling swivel studs on the forend to accommodate both a bipod and a sling.

Remington's latest version, the 700 Police LTR (Light Tactical Rifle), seems to be leading a trend toward shorter, lighter rifles. It has a 20" heavy barrel, weighs 7.5 lbs. and is available in either .223 Rem. or .308 Win. The average velocity loss is only 90 fps between the 26" and 20" barrel, a modicum that is truly insignificant in the law enforcement picture.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the LTR model is a very unusual barrel fluting pattern. There are three flutes spaced equidistant around the barrel. They're shallow and wide. The flutes run 13.5" and are 0.4" wide, but only about 0.007" deep. None of this is haphazard. Extensive testing by Remington engineers found that this combination worked best to create the best harmonics in the 20" barrel.



SAVAGE ARMS

Someone quipped that the Savage Tactical Rifle was made as a "low bid special." If price alone were the determining factor, Savage probably would win many contracts, but it is an error of huge proportion to dismiss this old gunmaker just because the guns are inexpensive.

Savage boasts the broadest range of calibers in tactical rifles. Their short action model 10FP is available in: .223 Rem., 7mm-08 Rem., .260 Rem. and .308 Win.

The 110FP long action is available in: .25-'06 Rem., .30-'06, 7mm Rem. Mag. and .300 Win. Mag. Even better for the 17 percent of the population that care—all are available in left-handed actions. The barrels are 24" in length. Stocks are made from a black composite material with pillar bedding blocks built in. Weight is approximately 8 lbs.

The broad choice of calibers give the opportunity to depart from standard calibers. The 7mm-08 is a great cartridge, ditto the .25-'06, yet both would receive little notice in a tactical application. An even worse mistake would be to overlook the .260 Rem. This is truly a great little cartridge. There is something special about the 6.5mm bore and the .260 Rem. is superbly accurate and a crackerjack long range cartridge. The only drawback is the limited availability of factory ammunition, but that should improve over time.

Over the last few years I've shot several Savage rifles and found them to be highly accurate and comfortable to shoot. The only criticism I can level is that they have triggers only a lawyer could love. Actually, that is true of most tactical rifles in the non-custom category.



STURM, RUGER & CO.

Ruger doesn't call their M77 Target rifle a tactical gun, but it surely could be. And it has the added attraction of not being black. The stainless steel is matte finished and it sports a brown laminated stock. Barrels are 26" long. It is available in .223 Rem., .220 Swift, .243 Win. and .308 Win. I had the opportunity to shoot one not too long ago and accuracy was excellent.

A new entry in the tactical rifle market comes from the famed FN-Herstal group that just happens to own USRAC, the manufacturer of Winchester firearms. FN Manufacturing also has a plant in Columbia, S.C. and the two are teamed up to produce a hot new tactical rifle.

The rifle is built on a Winchester Model 70 controlled feed action. The 26" barrel is hammer forged and chrome plated in both the bore and chamber. It is made in South Carolina. The stock is from H-S Precision.

The FN Model 70 has a three-position Winchester safety, four round detachable box magazine and weighs 9.9 lbs. I've only seen show samples that looked great, but we have not had the opportunity to test the rifle. By the time you read this, they should be readily available through FN's law enforcement distributors.

FN SPECIAL POLICE



ROBAR

Robbie Barrkman of Robar knows what is going on when it comes to building really great, custom tactical rifles and then training folks in how to use them right. Robar is a true custom shop that uses Remington 700 actions to build some of the most accurate sniper rifles available anywhere at any price. Robar also does some very fine gun finishes that make the guns nearly impervious to the elements, and stock finishes in all the popular camo colors.

Packages have lots of options, and Barrkman tells me that short barrels are very popular. Robar also modifies a McMillan stock with a proprietary hinge mechanism just forward of the pistol grip that allows the stock to fold to the left. There is a locking mechanism that allows absolutely no wiggle when the

stock is in the extended position.

For really special applications, they have developed a new trigger guard and floorplate that allows the 700 action to accept standard M-14 magazines. Feeding is slick.

I've tested both tactical and varmint rifles that came from Barrkman's shop and have been impressed. Robar rifles are available in standard calibers and most come with a 1/2 minute accuracy guarantee for three shots at 100 yards "with appropriate ammunition." That's a pretty bold statement. I would have probably added something to include the ability of the shooter.

These are truly cutting edge custom rifles and are priced accordingly, although not prohibitively.



H-S PRECISION

Most of us probably know H-S Precision for their composite stocks. Many of the rifles you've seen here have them. But they offer quite a bit more. They make their own action, called the Pro-Series 2000, and they are the only major manufacturer to produce their own cut rifled barrels. With the exception of some small parts, like screws, supplied by vendors, the major components are all made under the same roof.

The H-S catalog contains seven different tactical stocks, and their "varmint" style rifle would also meet the needs of law enforcement handily. The Pro-Series rifles of .30 caliber or smaller carry a 1/2 MOA guarantee, "using match components." The company has an excellent test facility and includes a test target with the gun.



SIG ARMS

Today there's just a little confusion over exactly who SIG is. They've been acquiring companies and names lately. But they have a couple of truly top-of-the-line tactical rifles. The first of these is the Sauer SSG300 Precision Tactical Rifle. It has a McMillan adjustable tactical stock, 23" barrel and a very slick action that is common to several of the new Sauer rifles. It's a fairly heavy rifle at 12 lbs., and the one I examined had a great trigger.

One of SIG's acquisitions was Blaser and their R93 Long Range Sporter is pretty nifty. It takes full advantage of the

Blaser straight-pull design, which is fast and positive. It has a 24" free floating barrel, 10 round magazine and weighs 10.4 lbs.

And even though it doesn't have "tactical" anywhere in the name, the SHR 970 Synthetic Stock would fit nicely in the role of a light rifle. I had the opportunity to shoot one of these on a visit to SIG's New Hampshire plant and was pleasantly surprised to shoot a couple of sub-MOA groups with just standard .308 hunting ammo with 150 gr. bullets, fodder that's not normally associated with super accuracy.



STEYR

Steyr's catalog lists no less than seven rifles in the SBS series, three in the Scout series and another five in the SSG line—truly something for any tactical need, and certainly too many to enumerate every model or variation. Barrel lengths and weight range from 19" and 6.25 lbs. for the Scout rifles up to 25.6" and 10.5 lbs. for the SSG PII with a McMillan adjustable stock. Both the SBS and SSG series also have versions with 20" barrels.

I have tested an SBS Tactical HB in .308 Win. The rifle makes

good use of precision molded composite materials for the trigger guard and magazine well. The barrel is the traditional Steyr cold hammer forged. Operation was slick and accuracy very good with most ammunition grouping under 1" and Federal Gold Medal Match producing 3/4" groups pretty routinely.

Most of the rifles mentioned are available to the public, and I know more than a few shooters, myself included, who have purchased one or more of these guns because of their serious good looks and out-of-the-box accuracy.

THE M14

Stuck Between The Legendary Garand And The Long-lived M16, America's "Between Wars" Battle Rifle Never Attained The Accolades It Deserves.

**By Chuck Karwan
Photos By Robert Bruce**

The M14 is the Rodney Dangerfield of America's battle rifles—it don't get no respect. Even though the M14 was basically an improved M1 Garand with a box magazine, it never achieved the sort of reverential respect inspired by John Garand's legend, the "greatest battle implement ever devised," according to George S. Patton.

The M14 should have been equally successful, but it wasn't.

The M14 was only produced for about four years and began to be replaced by the M16 after only five or six years in service. In 12 years, it was almost completely replaced by the M16 as the standard rifle for the Army and Marines. The M14 had such a short life as the Army's standard rifle that many units went right from the Garand to the M16, never receiving M14s at all.

However, the M14 is a better combat rifle than the M1 in virtually every way. It is more accurate, holds more rounds, is more reliable under adverse conditions, uses a detachable magazine rather than an *en bloc* clip, is lighter and is much easier to equip with optical sights.

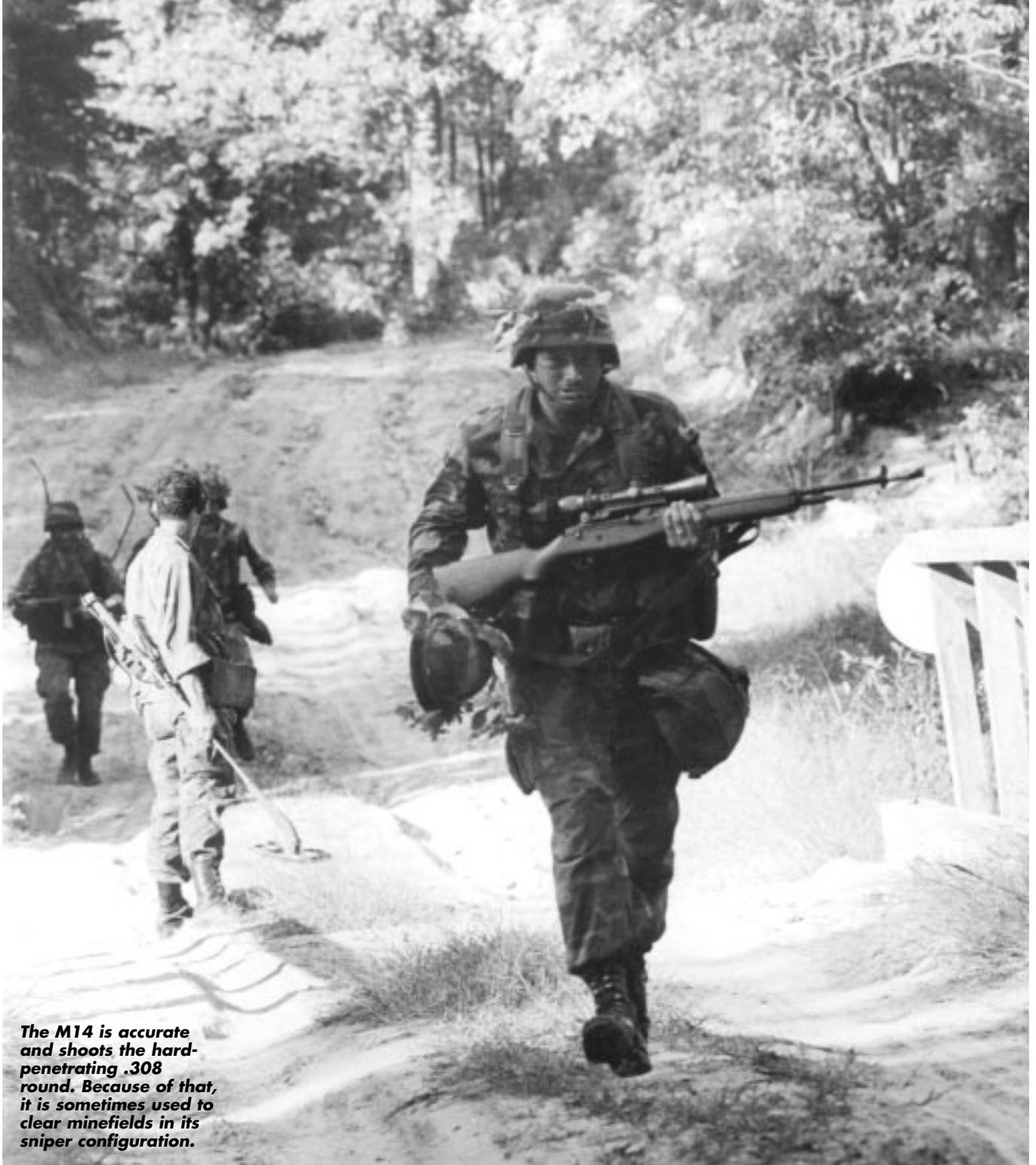
Indeed, no 7.62mm NATO chambered



The M14 was employed in Vietnam in the early years. The Marines used them longer than anyone else, but then again the stubborn Leathernecks held onto their '03s even after the rest of the Army switched to the Garand back in The Big One.







The M14 is accurate and shoots the hard-penetrating .308 round. Because of that, it is sometimes used to clear minefields in its sniper configuration.

battle rifle, such as the Belgian FAL or the German G3, will out-perform the M14 in any significant way. The M14's main problem was that it was designed for the last war instead of the next war.

Post War Era

During the post-World War II era and the formation of NATO, the U.S. pressured its allies to standardize on the .308 cartridge for rifle use. This cartridge approximates the ballistics of the venerable .30-'06 in a shorter package. This

was in spite of the fact that several allies pushed for intermediate assault rifle cartridges like those pioneered by the Germans, with their 7.92mm Kurtz Stg44, and those adopted by the Soviets, with their 7.62x39mm AK47.

In December 1953, following extensive testing in both the U.S. and England, a committee representing the newly formed North Atlantic Treaty Organization bowed to U.S. pressure and recommended the adoption of the U.S. T65 cartridge for rifle and machinegun use. The

next year, it was officially adopted as the 7.62mm NATO. Its civilian designation is the .308 Win., easily one of the most successful hunting and target rifle chamberings of the post-World War II era.

Ordnance Trails

During the American trials for a 7.62mm battle rifle, the U.S. Ordnance establishment had two entries, the T44, based on the venerable Garand, and the T47, based loosely on the equally venerable BAR. These were pitted against the



As a squad automatic rifle, the M14 was vastly superior to the BAR. Just ask any grunt who had to hump one!

Belgian FAL and an interesting scope-sighted bullpup rifle called the EM2, developed by the British.

Eventually, the American T47 rifle was dropped, and the FAL greatly out-performed the EM2. When the U.S. showed interest in FAL, it soon became the most promising candidate for a standard NATO rifle. Both Britain and the U.S. ordered 3,000 FN-FAL rifles for testing. The U.S. FAL was designated as the T48.

After receiving superb test results from the FAL, Belgium and Britain went ahead and officially adopted the FAL in 1954, with most of the British Commonwealth following shortly thereafter. Their hope was to influence the U.S. to adopt the FAL as well, so there would be a common rifle for NATO.

The U.S. continued testing and development of both the T44 and T48 rifles. Springfield Armory produced the T44 test rifles, while small quantities of FALs were manufactured by High Standard and H&R. After extensive troop trials, including arctic tests, the U.S. Test Board declared that both the T44 and T48 were suitable for adoption.

The Final Nod

Finally, in the spring of 1957, the U.S. Army announced that, "The performance of both weapons [FAL and M14] throughout the tests was superior to that of the M1 rifle, and between the two there were only marginal differences [in performance]. The major factors favoring the T44 are that it is one pound lighter than either the M1 or the T48 and is considered better suited for American transition to both mass production and training than the Belgian design."

Put into plain language, the T44 could be made on the same machinery and tooling as the Garand. Also, the M14's conventional stock configuration allowed for



Equipped with target sights, the M14 was—and still is—capable of winning a high power match at Camp Perry. In fact, the M14's trophy case is chock-full of national titles and national records.

M14 SPECIFICATIONS

Caliber:	7.62mm NATO
Operation:	Gas piston with rotating bolt
Cyclic rate:	750 rpm
Feed mechanism:	20-round box magazine from the bottom
Weight empty:	8.7 lbs.
Length overall:	44.14"
Barrel length:	22"
Front sight:	Post with protective ears
Rear sight:	Peep, fully adjustable
Furniture:	Wood or synthetic stock with metal butt plate
Finish:	Phosphate (Parkerizing)

shooting positions, techniques, drills and a manual of arms similar to the Garand.

Little consideration seems to have been given for the desirability of having a rifle that was the same as that of our major allies. Most objective observers feel that the latter should have been given more weight.

Official Adoption

The T44 was officially adopted as the M14 in May, 1957, and the hope for a common NATO rifle was dashed forever. The M14 began production in late 1959. Besides Springfield Armory, the M14 was produced on government contract at Winchester, H&R and Thompson-Ramo-Woolridge (TRW).

Our allies went their respective ways with the FAL and H&K

G3. Ironically, no sooner had those countries committed to a 7.62mm NATO chambered rifle than the U.S. halted production of the M14 in 1964 and started to procure large quantities of the 5.56mm M16 to replace it.

The M16 is a selective-fire assault rifle with a straight-line stock chambered for an intermediate assault rifle cartridge— just like many NATO countries wanted in the first place.

Manufacturing Base

The M14 was only made in two countries: the U.S. and Taiwan. M14s have also been manufactured in China for export purposes, many going to communist guerrillas in the Philippines, where the M14 is highly favored to this day.

We supplied Taiwan with

173,729 M14 rifles, plus the tooling and equipment, reportedly from the TRW contract, to manufacture their own. The Taiwanese have made over 1 million specimens of their Type 57 version of the M14, but have long since replaced it with the M16 and a locally made assault rifle.

Other than the U.S. and Taiwan, the only other major user of M14s has been the Philippines, who received some 104,000 of them from the U.S. Even though they, too, have long since adopted the M16, it is still common to see Filipino combat patrols with a couple of M14s along.

Other one-time M14 users include Venezuela, Columbia, Ethiopia, Costa Rica, Honduras and the Dominican Republic. Israel received some 22,500, but their M14s were only issued to their Civil Defense Guards and have more recently been sold off as surplus.

A selective-fire, heavy-barreled version of the M14, called the M15, was also adopted at the same time as the M14 for use as an automatic rifle like the BAR, but it was never produced.

Garand Vs. M14

The M14 differed from the Garand in a number of ways. Besides the obvious difference in chambering, the M14 had a shorter action to accommodate the shorter cartridge and a chrome-lined bore to prevent corrosion and extend barrel life.

It also used a 20-round detachable box magazine instead of the eight-round, top-loading clip of the M1. This gave more shots between reloads, the ability to do an easy tactical reload, the ability to mount telescopic or night vision sights directly over the bore, and the ability to easily switch loads, from ball to tracer.

It also has a stripper clip guide to allow the reloading of a magazine in the rifle with five-round stripper clips, the way 7.62mm NATO ball rifle ammunition was typically packaged.

Another significant difference was the addition of a roller to the right lug of the bolt. This corrected the tendency of the M1 to jam from excess friction at the bolt cam due to lack of lubrication, dirt or foul weather. This change alone makes the M14 more reliable than an M1 in virtually all conditions.

In addition, the gas system of the M14 taps gas from the center of the barrel, instead of on the end like the M1, and uses a separate piston and a shorter operating rod, thereby correcting the weakness of the long, delicate op rod of the M1. Yet another change is the introduction of a substantial flash suppressor. Unfortunately, this was a mixed blessing.

The flash suppressor of the M14 does

Out with the old and in with the new. The M16 (right) replaced the M14 as the official military rifle of the United States in 1964.





The .308 doesn't kick in an M14. The rifle weighs nearly 10 lbs., and any GI worth his C-rats can control one, even in sitting.



The sniper version of the M14 was designated as the M21. Note the adjustable cheek piece which was necessary to get a good cheek weld when sighting through the scope.



The GI at far left is carrying a full-auto M14 with a pistol grip and bipod. Two M14s were issued per squad in Vietnam, where the M14's superior penetration was often a factor in the dense jungle.



cut down muzzle flash. The protuberance, in my opinion, does nothing but add 3" to the rifle's length. In addition, the design of the flash suppressor and front sight assembly is unnecessarily complicated. It consists of five parts with great potential for becoming loose or out of adjustment.

Whenever I was qualifying troops on the M14 and had some fail to qualify, the first thing I would do was inspect their rifle's flash suppressor and front sight. Most of the time, one or the other or both would be loose.

Match shooters have also found that water dripping through the flash suppressor when shooting in the rain interferes with the rifle's accuracy, as will any misalignment of the unit. As a consequence, the hole in the flash suppressor is normally reamed out to a larger size on match and sniper rifles to help prevent interference with the bullet.

Full-Auto Follies

Another change from the M1 that had regrettable consequences was the addition of a selector switch to allow automatic fire.

The idea was that with this capability, the M14 could take over the roles of the BAR, the M2 Carbine and the submachinegun. In truth, the .308 cartridge is too powerful for controllable automatic fire in such a lightweight weapon.

As a result, almost all M14s had a selector block installed that only allowed semiautomatic fire. However, since conversion to selective fire only requires the removal of a pin and the replacement of a couple parts, an Army-issue M14 is classified as a machinegun. As a result, the number of mil-spec M14 rifles legally in civilian hands is only a handful—those that were registered during the 1968 amnesty or manufactured prior to 1986 and procured directly from one of the civilian manufacturers.

Because of this, several commercial manufacturers have built semiautomatic M14 clones for the civilian market.

A small number of M14 rifles, some 8,000, were issued with full-auto selectors in a configuration that allowed reasonably controllable automatic fire. These were originally designated as the M14E2s, but

later renamed as M14A1s. These rifles featured the addition of the M2 bipod, a straight-line butt stock with a vertical pistol grip, a folding-forward pistol grip and a muzzle brake that fitted over the flash suppressor. While the M14A1 was no Bren gun, it was reasonably effective as an automatic rifle at close to moderate ranges.

Big Red One

The M14 was issued to early U.S. infantry units deployed to Vietnam, notably the First Infantry Division (The Big Red One) and the Marines. Only the Army units used the M14A1, issuing two to each rifle squad. Talking to vets of that period, I have found that the M14 and M14A1 were highly regarded by most combat troops and gave excellent service. The lighter weight of the M16 and its ammunition as well as its selective fire capability were also popular, but so was the power and penetration of the M14 and its robust durability and reliability.

Production of the M14 was terminated in 1963, because the political powers of the time were pushing the M16. Total U.S.



Springfield Armory manufactures a high-grade civilian-legal copy of the M14 that they call the M1A. Here are the standard version (middle) and the popular Scout version (top) that the author claims is his all-time favorite configuration. At bottom is shown a military version with pistol grip and scope. Note the small selector switch just under the rear sight, above the trigger.



production of the M14 amounted to some 1,380,000 rifles.

The production breakdown was: Springfield Armory, 167,000; Winchester, 356,501; H&R, 537,582; and TRW, 319,691. Even though the M16 supposedly replaced the M14 in Vietnam by about 1968, in many units, like the 1st Cavalry Division where I served, the M14 continued to soldier on in a limited fashion well into the 1970s.

M14 Accessories

The M14 has the usual military rifle accessories, like the M6 bayonet, standard web sling, grenade launcher, blank

adapter, winter trigger, muzzle brake that fits over the flash suppressor, bipod, various scopes and night vision sights and much more. The cleaning kit is intended to be carried in two holes in the stock under a trap door in the butt plate, in a fashion similar to that of the Garand.

While the M14 originally had a wood stock, usually walnut or beech, during the Vietnam War an excellent synthetic stock was developed and issued. The synthetic stock weighed the same as a wood one, but was much stronger and more tolerant of exposure to moisture. It also sported molded-in checkering at the pistol grip and forend for a more secure hold.

Match Versions

The M14 spawned a number of official spin-offs. One of the first was the M14NM, or M14 National Match. This rifle went through an evolution of changes, but, in general, it consisted of an M14 made to tighter specifications, with a non-chrome-lined match grade barrel. It also featured sights with half-minute instead of full-minute adjustments, the action was glass bedded into the stock and a selector block was welded into place to prevent the installation of an automatic selector. Many M14NM rifles have been issued to civilian rifle competitors for use in the National Matches, but only a handful have been



officially sold to civilians.

Another spin-off was the superb XM21, later redesignated as the M21. This was a sniper version that did stalwart service in Vietnam right to the end. Many years later, after the bolt-action M24 sniper rifle was adopted to replace the M21, there was a product-improved M21 called the M25 that was used primarily by the Army Special Operations community.

In addition, there are other scope-sighted M14s employed by the Army Explosives Ordnance and Demolitions (EOD) folks and the Navy for deto-

nating such things as mines on the ocean surface, booby traps, land-based mines and the like. The Marines also have an ongoing program where accurized and scoped M14 rifles are used for sniper support weapons, aerial marksman and designated marksman. The M14 is currently the official primary rifle of the U.S. Navy, not the M16. It is issued to guards and security forces, used for mine disposal, and is often deployed by the Navy SEALs as a combat weapon.

Indeed, the M14 saw considerable use by the SEALs during Operation Desert Storm, where it was well-liked

for its long-range capabilities and reliability in severe conditions.

Accuracy First

In my considerable experience, the typical rack-grade M14 is more accurate than an average Garand by a significant margin. With good match ammunition, most like-new specimens will shoot under 3 MOA, with many doing much better. With some tuning, I have seen several that will shoot 1 MOA or close to it.

A go-for-broke match M14, particularly with a heavyweight match barrel, will be a consistent half-minute performer with match grade ammunition. Yes, that's as good or better than most bolt-action sniper rifles.

Indeed, military service teams shooting match M14s at 1,000 yards at the



***Finger on the trigger!
That's a DQ.***

National Matches have commonly equaled or beat top flight shooters with bolt-action match rifles.

Comparisons In Order

Compared to the M14, the Garand is superior in most ways, except for a couple. Its slim, unsupported, forward barrel section is much more prone to get bent than that of an M1. Typically, this would happen on a parachute jump or during bayonet training. Also, its light barrel gives the rifle a butt-heavy balance, inferior to that of the M1.

Comparing the M14 to the other .308 battle rifles is an interesting exercise. I





believe it is a slightly better rifle than the FAL, primarily because of its far superior iron sights and much sturdier and convenient scope mounting system. However, the FAL is easier to maintain in the field, thanks to its break-open construction for easy access to the bolt and rifle bore from the rear.

The M14 is also slightly superior to the HK G3, because of superior iron sights and softer recoil. Both the FAL and M14 also have better human engineering than the G3.

The M14 has an extra advantage because of plentiful and inexpensive magazine availability, ready parts availability and the fact that it qualifies as a service rifle for CMP and NRA competition.

Civilian M14

The need and demand for a semiautomatic civilian version of the M14 rifle was obvious almost from its inception. Why Winchester, H&R or TRW did not produce a civilian M14 when they had all the tooling and know-how will always be a mystery to me.

The demand was further increased when Army and Marine shooters began to dominate service rifle competition



The M14 could be equipped with a night-vision scope. This '60s version was somewhat obtrusive. Note the electric cord running to the unit.





with accurized M14s.

Eventually, an enterprising firm in Texas registered the name “Springfield Armory” as a commercial firm and started production of an M14 clone using an investment cast receiver and as many surplus parts as they could scrounge up.

It had no receiver lug to mount a selector on, so it was a semiautomatic rifle, but the BATF, never troubled with such details, would not let them use the designation of M14. As an alternative, they chose the name M1A.

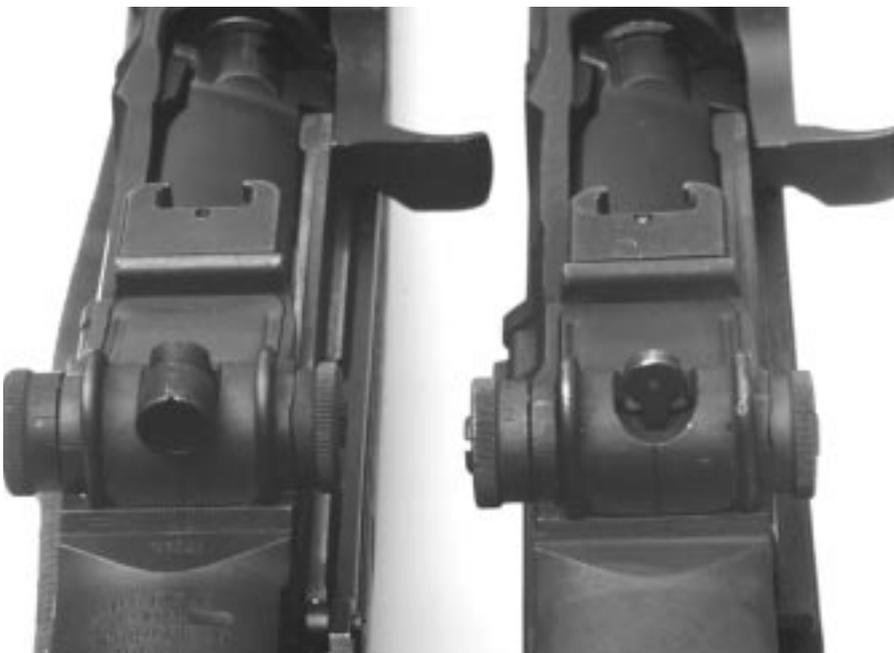
After a short period of production, this company was purchased by Bob Reese and moved to Illinois. Springfield Armory of Geneseo, Ill., has been the major supplier of M1A rifles ever since. Their M1A line includes quite a variety of options, including standard grade rifles, bush rifles with 18” barrels, a scout rifle, match rifles, Super Match rifles and even an M21 sniper version. The single most accurate M14 rifle I have ever fired was one of the latter, and it was a consistent half-minute gun.

Inevitably, others got into the act of making M14-type receivers and in some cases assembling whole rifles using surplus or other parts. One of these was the now defunct Fed Ord Inc., which made relatively inexpensive M14 clones using an investment cast receiver and surplus parts from, I believe, Taiwan Type 57 rifles. They called their version the M14SA. These are a little rough around the edges, but the two examples I tested were properly headspaced and shot well.

Another maker of semiautomatic M14 rifles was Armscorp of America. They built their rifles with a particularly nicely finished investment cast receiver and surplus U.S. government M14 parts. Like Springfield Armory, they offered a variety of options and grades. These seem to be quite nice rifles, but appear to be no longer in production.

Smith Arms International at one time made M14 semiauto receivers milled from forgings. If there is any great advantage to the latter over a good investment cast receiver that is properly heat-treated and finish-machined, I am not aware of it. These receivers were very expensive and were usually found only on the highest grade match rifles. They are no longer in production.

There were a number of other manufacturers of M14-type receivers, including Enterprise Arms, A. R. Sales and others. Also, several enterprising gunsmiths took overlapping pieces from demilled M14 receivers and welded them together. Normally, the selector lug is cut off. The result



The M14 came with a peep sight in either a target version (left) or a standard. The difference was in the click-stops; a target version dialed in half-MOA increments, while the battle sight went in full-minute clicks.





is a perfectly legal semiautomatic M14 with military markings.

Then there are the Chinese M14s. Century Arms at one time imported an M14 Sporter that appeared to be made from used Taiwanese Type 57 parts fitted to a forged and milled semiautomatic M14-type receiver. These receivers were quite nice, although they do not have the hard skin of the U.S. military M14 receiver. Several in the hands of friends and myself operate and shoot well.

Chinese-made M14 rifles were also marketed under the Norinco and Polytech names, with a sort of pseudo flash suppressor with no bayonet lug, again to meet

the BATF import criteria. I have no experience with them, but I have read independent reports that state that many have excessive headspace and bolts that are too soft.

Since President Clinton has halted the importation of all firearms and ammunition from China with a “voluntary trade agreement,” it is probably a moot point anyway.

The M14 has received a lot of unwarranted bad press over the years. Part of it was because of its tortuously long time in development and relatively huge developmental costs. Also, many veterans never got to use it. Many Army and National Guard units went from Garands right to M16 rifles and never got issued

M14s. Many of the units that did get them didn’t have them long before they were replaced by M16s.

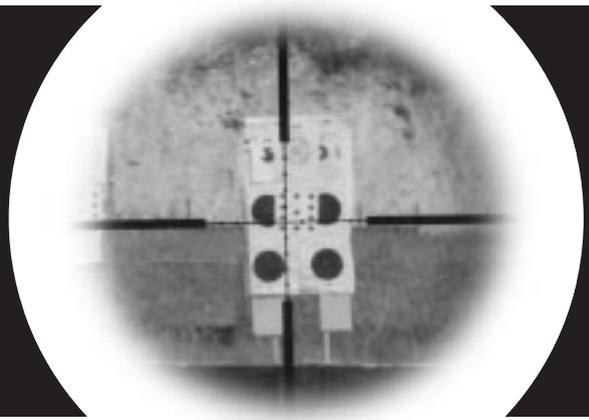
The truth is that the M14 is an excellent rifle and is likely to continue its limited role in the U.S. military for the foreseeable future. It will continue to be a major player in the competition field as well as the sniping field for many years to come. It is certainly a favorite



The author was an infantry officer in Vietnam who carried an M14 in combat. He is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.



LEUPOLD TACTICAL SCOPES



THE NEWEST LONG RANGE SERIES, FEATURING AN ILLUMINATED RETICLE AND OTHER MODELS WITH MILDOT RETICLES, IS THE HANDS-DOWN CHOICE OF SWAT SNIPERS.

By Charles E. Petty

Tactical rifles are almost defined by the scope they wear. Unless the glass is good, the rifle is worthless. In this market, Leupold rules. But if there is consensus on the brand, agreement is much harder to find on the type or power of the scope to use. Very early on, the Leupold Mark 4—originally designed for military use—was the best game in town, but it was expensive and the fixed 10x or 16x power was sometimes too much magnification for law enforcement applications.

Units began to choose from Leupold's target scopes, variable powered scopes in 3-9x (later 3.5-10x), 4.5-14x, 6-18x or even 6.5-20x. In talking to some elite level trainers as well as SWAT team members, this is where consensus failed to appear. Several of the shooters chose the Leupold Vari-X III in 6.5-20x. I asked what power they normally used and was a little surprised to hear 20x. When I questioned this, most replied that it was to make positive target identification.

Trainers even have conflicting opin-

ions here. One referred to it as "using the rifle scope for a spotting scope." This is one place where variables can help. If necessary, the target can be identified with the higher magnification and then turned down to a lower power to let the officer see the larger scene.

Mildot Reticles

Over my shoulder I heard the clear voice of the spotter, "Give me two mils left. Send it!"

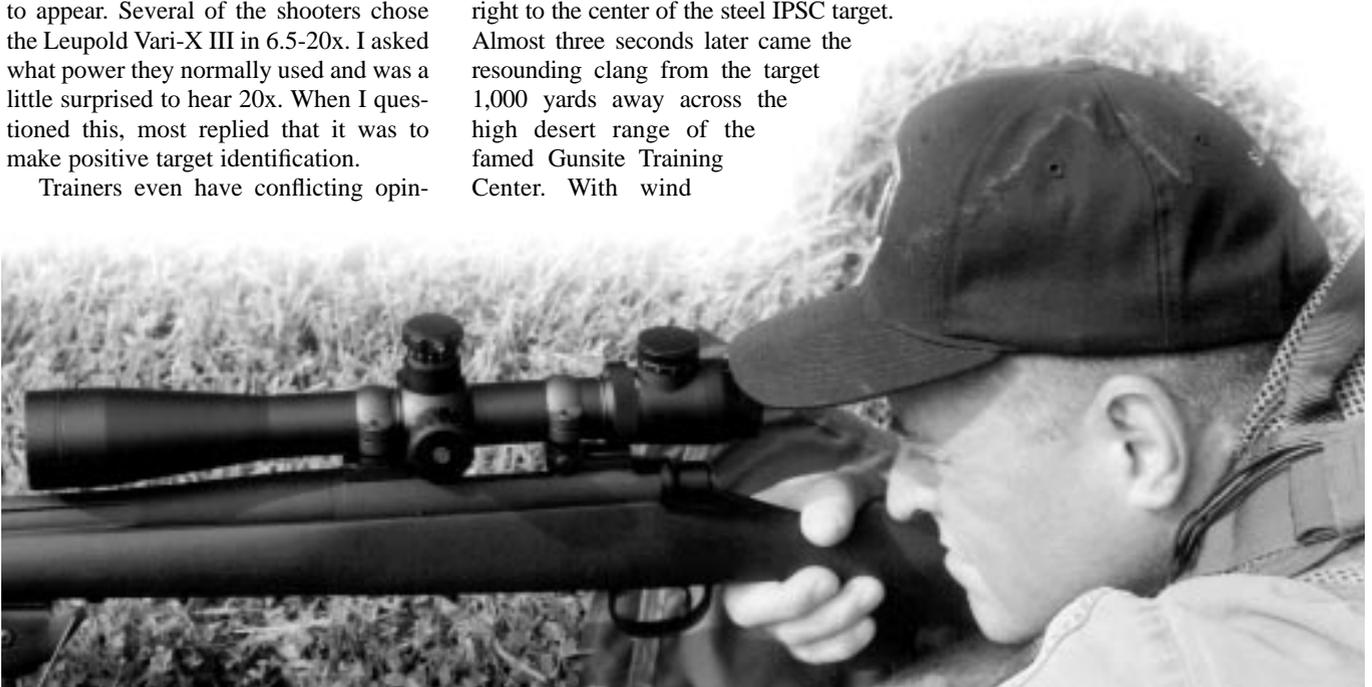
The custom .300 Win. Mag. tactical rifle bucked on the bipod and quickly recovered on target. Then I saw it. From outside the field of view to the left, the boil of the moving bullet appeared and arced far to the right, maybe the ultimate curve ball.

The 180 gr. Sierra Match King drove right to the center of the steel IPSC target. Almost three seconds later came the resounding clang from the target 1,000 yards away across the high desert range of the famed Gunsite Training Center. With wind

corrections provided by a very skilled spotter, I was able to repeat the shot at will. It was my first experience with mildot reticles at long range. It was not to be the last.

Mildot reticles are not new. For years they were used for military range finding and elevation adjustments for artillery. Then they were applied to military rifle scopes and have recently found their way into law enforcement and civilian use.

While most shooters are familiar with the term "minute of angle," speaking of mils is akin to a foreign language. *Hatcher's Notebook* defines it as, "The mil is the angle whose tangent is 1/1000." Both MOA and mil are simply other ways of dividing a circle into segments, other than degrees, which are too large for the





purposes of precision marksmanship.

There are a couple of different values for a mil, but the one in common use today is 3.6" at 100 yards or 36" at 1,000. A mildot reticle then has a series of dots both on the vertical and horizontal planes that represent a mil. Mildots can also be used to estimate range. If one knows the height of the target and the number of mils on the reticle to cover the height, then an approximate range can be calculated.

While this can be done on a scientific pocket calculator, the equations are a bit complicated. An easier solution is a handy slide rule-type gadget called the "Mildot Master," which will, if you know the required numbers for target height and mils subtended, give a good approximation of

the range. In this age of laser rangefinders it is not often necessary to use the reticle for range estimates, but they are still an invaluable aid for determining holdoffs for both windage and elevation.

Mildots really begin to shine outside 200 yards. The properly trained marksman will know the precise trajectory information for his specific gun and load and have it committed to memory or taped to the gun. He'll also have a set of "come ups" for shots beyond the customary 100 yard zero.

Long Range Line

Leupold's new line of Long Range scopes are available with mildot reticles. I installed their latest Vari-X III 3.5-10x with an illuminated reticle on an equally new

Remington 700 Police-LTR (Light Tactical Rifle) in .223. It was zeroed to be dead-on with Federal 69 gr. Match ammo at 100 yards. It only took a couple of shots to learn how much holdover I needed to routinely nail a 4" steel square at 300 yards.

Illuminated Reticles

When illuminated reticles began to appear on rifle scopes several years ago, my initial response was not very favorable. I was wrong. When firing in low light, in the evening, I was surprised how much ambient light it takes to clearly see a conventional reticle, but with the illumination reticle—generally turned to a very low setting—the green or red glow is right there. With just a bit of light to illuminate



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Mark 4 M1-10x40mm (matte)



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LONG RANGE



Vari-XIII 3.5-10x40mm Long Range M1 (matte)



Vari-XIII 3.5-10x40mm Long Range M3 (matte)



Vari-XIII 4.5-14x50mm Long Range Tactical (matte)

Value of 1 Mil At Different Ranges

Yards	Inches
100	3.6
200	7.2
300	10.8
400	14.4
500	18.0
600	21.6
700	25.2
800	28.8
900	32.4
1,000	36.0

Mildot Table of Values At 100 Yards

1 Mil	3.600"
7/8 Mil	3.150"
3/4 Mil	2.700"
1/2 Mil	1.800"
1/4 Mil	0.900"
1/8 Mil	0.450"

the target, hits were easy.

Don't confuse illuminated reticles with night vision gear. They aren't the same. Night vision gear amplifies available light thousands of times, but even with it, positive target identification is not always possible because of the green monochromatic view.

This is another of those subjects where opinions differ. Since many incidents happen during the hours of darkness, SWAT troops need night vision gear but opinions differ as to whether it should be a handheld device or a special scope. In a way it becomes a financial rather than tactical problem. A good handheld device can be considerably less costly than a special scope.

My research for this article included talking with trainers, SWAT officers and representatives from gun and ammo manufacturers. I got quite a few different opinions on things like power and reticles, but when I asked about brands, Leupold was the overwhelming first choice.

I asked one trainer about the European scopes. His blunt reply surprised me, "They're gorgeous, but I don't like the idea of paying more for the scope than the gun cost." He's got a point. The

fine imports are surely brighter, but on rifles that are likely to be abused, a Leupold is more than good enough.

I tested the accuracy of a Leupold 3.5-10x Long Range's click repeatability by an old test called "shooting the box." Shoot a three shot group at your customary zero, then move the bullet strike 6" to the right (24 clicks) and shoot three more. Then down 6", shoot group, left 6", shoot group and finally up 6" and the bullets should land right back in the original group. And so it was.

We are always warned about "backlash" in scope adjustments and told to go several clicks beyond the point we want and then back up to the right number. This one didn't need that at all. Adjustments were precise and repeatable. That comment is not limited to one scope: It's true of all the Tactical or Varmint scopes I've tried.

Leupold has a huge market share of the tactical scope market. Why?  Because they've earned it.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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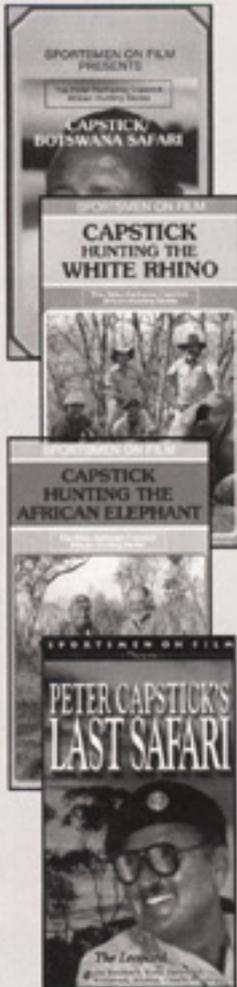
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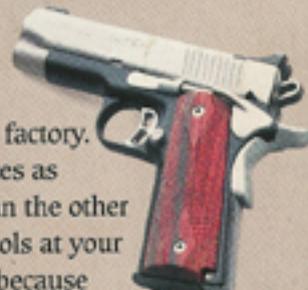
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