GUN TESTS®

THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

$5.95 April 2015/Vol. XXVII, No. 4

COMMANDERS: REMINGTON VERSUS COLT







We liked both the Remington R1 Commander, left, and the Colt Commander O4012XSE in stainless, and we realize many of our readers would be happy with either gun. But one did perform better. **Page 6**



HIGH-CAP 357 MAGNUMS

Are 8-shot revolvers worth more money for their two extra rounds? We compare three Smith & Wessons to find out: Two Performance Center models, the 627 and 327, take on a veteran Model 686 6-shooter. **Page 10**



12-GAUGE OVER/UNDERS

A reader asked us to test a Browning Citori Crossover against another stackbarrel, so we paired it up with a Franchi Instinct SL. A lot of clay birds had to die before we could pick a winner. **Page 16**

DEFENSE RIFLES: COLT'S LE MODEL TAKES ON BERETTA





Is the flashy ARX 100 good enough to beat out a stalwart AR-15? **Page 20**

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DOWNRANGE

THE PIG BOX AND TSA



Todd Woodard

I **admit** I was miffed when the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) opened a computer case I checked as baggage to Las Vegas for the SHOT Show back in January. The case and contents were a load — a 38-pound Pelican 1730 transport case with a 27-inch iMac in it. I prefer to use a desktop machine to update the GUN TESTS Facebook page, YouTube page, website, and new-product files when I'm at SHOT for a week. I've done the jobs with a laptop before, and I admit, it's much easier to carry-on a smaller machine. But once it's set up, the full-size iMac is heaven while we're processing words, photos, and movies for our various media in a hurry. In previous years, I had shipped my back-up iMac 27 in its original box a few days prior, so I hadn't had to wrestle what I lovingly refer to as the Pig Box through airport check in. I call it that because the Pelican is big enough (37.5 x 27.1 x 14.4 inches) to hold a whole pig. Oh yes, extra weight and size charges apply.

At the bag carousel in McCarran, I didn't notice the lock I'd had on the Pelican had been removed. But once I opened the Pig Box in the hotel room, I saw the cut lock, the TSA tape, and TSA statements that showed both the exterior case and the iMac shipping box inside the Pelican had been opened. To my eyes, the iMac was clearly an iMac and nothing else, but to an X-ray machine, who knows? It looked like the iMac had been unloaded and booted up at Hobby in Houston. Then, on the return trip from LV into Hobby, both the Pig and the iMac shipping box were opened, but the dirty underwear and socks I used to help cushion the machine, keyboard, and mouse in the shipping box looked undisturbed. So I moved on.

Later, I lost any lingering irritation about the searches when I saw TSA's 2014 security report summary. TSA had a busy year in 2014, screening more than 653 million passengers in 2014 (about 1.8 million per day). According to the agency, 2,212 firearms were discovered in carry-on bags at checkpoints across the country, averaging more than six firearms per day. There was a 22-percent increase in firearm discoveries from 2013's total of 1,813. Of those, 1,835 (83 percent) were loaded. Among the guns seized in Texas were a Kel-Tec Sub-2000 with two loaded magazines discovered in a carry-on bag at DFW. An AR-pattern rifle with three loaded magazines was discovered at the Dallas Love Field checkpoint. A loaded 380 ACP firearm was discovered in the rear pocket of a San Antonio International Airport (SAT) passenger during advanced-imaging-technology screening.

But the stuff TSA found in checked baggage was eye-popping: Six blocks of inert C-4 were discovered in a checked bag at Tampa (TPA); an improvised explosives device (IED) training kit was discovered at Honolulu (HNL); and a realistic replica of a Claymore anti-personnel mine was discovered in a checked bag at San Francisco International Airport (SFO).

Looking back on it, I'm not surprised the Pig Box attracted some attention at the airports. In fact, I'm completely okay with that now. **GT**

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GUN TESTS ACCEPTS NO COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING

GUN TESTS ® (ISSN No. 1042-6450) is published monthly by AG Media, Inc.; 111 Corporate Drive, Big Sandy, TX 75755-2446. Periodicals Postage Paid at Big Sandy, TX, and at additional mailing offices.

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Printed in U.S.A. Revenue Canada GST Account #128044658.

Subscriptions: $49 (U.S.) annually. Outside the U.S. and Canada $72 (U.S.) for one year, $144 (U.S.) for two years. Single copies $7.50 (U.S.). Bulk-rate subscriptions for organizations and educational institutions are available.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to: ***GUN TESTS***, P.O. Box 8535, Big Sandy, TX 75755-8535, or ***GUN TESTS***, P.O. Box 39, Norwich ON, N0J 1P0. **Canada Publishing Agreement** #40016479.

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Praise for 3 Striker Guns Article

Reader Lofland got just what he asked for in a comparison of 9mms from HK, SIG, and Walther. Reader Witter asks for slide-retraction data, and Reader Helms asks about M700 triggers.

Re "Special Reports," February 2015

I was extremely pleased when my issue arrived and on the cover was the comparison of the three new striker offerings I had asked about. All three are quality, but I am extremely happy to have purchased your consensus winner, the VP9. I don't know if you had the options I did. The VP9 choices for me were the three-dot white sights with the photo-luminescent paint that can be charged with a decent high-power flashlight and gain a few minutes of pretty bright night sights, along with two magazines. My FFL put a $560 price on this one. The option I choose was the LE version that came with Meprolight Tru-Dot night sights and three HK magazines for $614. The prices do not reflect the $30 transfer fee mandated by the state of Delaware. So, throw in the background check and my tip to him, and it came out to just about $670 completed. On Meprolite's IDF holster site, the sights were $139, and the mag I have seen for as much as $50 to $70. I feel very good about this purchase.

When I was checking it out, I was also told by SIG that night sights were included, and the trigger-safety toggle could be ordered if desired. After shooting my Glock G23C for more than 12 years, the HK toggle felt smooth and unobtrusive. I would also like to add that the Tru-Dot night sights were the brightest that I have ever encountered. I have a set of Mepros on my Kimber, and they are smaller and dimmer. The thing you mentioned about the Walther on the negative side, like the non-dovetailed sight, I had completely missed. You also mentioned your VP came with some grease on it, but mine needed a through cleaning because it was heavily greased. Great and informative article on three good striker-fired 9mms. In my mind, there is no doubt the HK VP9 was the most easily configured handgun, with superior ergonomics for many different hand sizes. A very thorough and precise article. Great job.

— John Lofland

Re Slide-Retraction Effort

I am a pleased subscriber of Gun Tests of some years, and will continue to be. Age has brought on some infirmities, one of which is a definite loss of hand strength. Surgeries on both wrists have no doubt contributed. I could swear that I read some time during 2014 that the force necessary to retract the slide on any semi-auto handgun that you tested would henceforth be measured and included in your data. If I am mistaken, I would sincerely encourage that this be measured and listed in the future. Women, old people, and others with a strength impediment will appreciate the information. You listing the trigger span and grip circumference is invaluable and really appreciated. This is seldom, if ever, shown in other publications' tests. Keep up the good work.

— Alan Witter

Hey Alan: I did say we were considering adding it to the template. I'm pretty convinced we should, but now I'm struggling with how to gauge it and supply

GUN TESTS REPORT CARD GRADING

Gun Tests Grade: A

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

Gun Tests Grade: B

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

Gun Tests Grade: C

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

Gun Tests Grade: D

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

Gun Tests Grade: F

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

the necessary instrumentation to all the writers who review pistols.
— Todd Woodard



Re "Mitchell's Mauser Special Report," March 2015

I bought one of these pristine rifles about 20 years ago at Big Five in Victorville, California. On inspection, I noticed much Cosmoline detritus extant, including on the bolt. I disassembled it and immersed all the metal parts in boiling water for about a half hour, just as we did in the Army with M1 Garands in the early 1960s when I served. After drying and washing with it alcohol, I reassembled this beauty. I too tried some pre-1940s ammo, and it worked fine. I had groups smaller than 2 inches at 200 meters. Now, I only use cartridges I make myself out of 30-06 cases that I resize and seat some 198-grain FMJ nickel-plated bullets I got from Ecuador. I prefer certain powders, such as 4985 and 2460. I can still hit silhouettes at 600 yards with my 77-year-old eyes and no scope. Again, thanks for the fine article on the Mitchell Mauser.

— Jim Lehmann

In the March issue, I neglected to include the Range Data table for the Mitchell Mauser. It appears on the right. — tw

Enjoyed the report on the M-48 Mauser, but one comment in page 24 is not accurate, as far as I know. The comment about the Canadian 8mm ammo, "It was mighty hot stuff, made in Canada and intended for the Bay of Pigs (never got there), ..." is not right. The 2506 Assault Brigade of Cuban Exiles was entirely equipped with WWII U.S. weapons, M1 Garands, BARs, Thompsons, M3s, and so on. Thus, the rifles fired 30-06 ammo. One ship, the *Houston*, was hit, beached, and eventually burned at the entrance of the bay, and carried 12,000 Garands. Thus, there was no need for any Mauser ammo at the site of the battle, and the brigade only had one day's supply of ammo when it landed. By the way, the rest of the brigade ammo was lost when the ships *Hudson* and *Rio Escondido* were sunk, thanks to the fact that the air support was denied, other ships approaching the landing sites were damaged and could never get to the landing beaches and had to retreat to open waters. The only Mausers used by the brigade were during training in their Central American bases in Guatemala and Nicaragua. The Castro forces had some WWII German 98K Mausers, given by the Soviet Union, by way of Czechoslovakia, before the Revolution or after that, but these were mainly used in guard duty by the militia units in factories and other government facilities, and as far as I know, none were used at the Bay of Pigs. Castro's forces were mainly equipped with FALs, Garands, Springfields, CZ Model 52s, MG 58s, and other Soviet weapons from WWII, thus they used 7.62x51 NATO, 30-06, 7.62x45, and 7.62x54R.

The only Canadian ammo used by Cuban Exiles was later supplied by the CIA for special operation teams that used the Browning HP. This excellent ammo for these pistols was procured in Canada from CIL industries and was originally intended to be used by the Canadian Armed Forces in their 9mm weapons. As far as I know, none of the Bay of Pigs Exiles had any HP's in 1961.

— Jose Tepedino

Thanks for your historic information. — Ray Ordorica

I just read your test of the Mitchell Yugo M-48. I'm proud to say there are two of these rifles in my household. These are fine rifles, accurate, reliable and with that "Mauser" mystique. Both have matching serial numbers on the bolt, receiver, and stock; and they also have the Yugoslavian Crest on the receiver. Both were produced in 1953. There were a couple of points that need to be made as part of the commentary:

The M-48 was made from 1950 until 1964/65. There were four renditions, excluding hunting-style exports:

- **M-48:** whose parts are all machined.
- **M-48 A:** whose parts are all machined, with the exception of a stamped floor plate.
- **M-48 B:** whose parts are mostly machined; with a stamped trigger guard, magazine floor plate, and barrel bands. The "B" models had the stamp "M-48A" on the receiver. I'm almost positive your gun was an M-48B.
- **M-48 BO:** which except for serial numbers, have no identifying markings. These share the same parts stamped as in the B model.

The stocks were not made from teak. The Yugoslavians used beech and ash, though they did make some with walnut stocks, even though walnut was in short supply. However, the Yugo factory sold

8x57 JS (8MM MAUSER) RANGE DATA

Unknown Mil-Spec 198-gr. FMJ Ball	**Mauser M-48**
Average Velocity	2485 fps
Muzzle Energy	2712 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	2.9 in.
Remington 170-gr. Core-Lokt SP	**Mauser M-48**
Average Velocity	2165 fps
Muzzle Energy	1768 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	2.5 in.
PMC 170-gr. RNSP	**Mauser M-48**
Average Velocity	2200 fps
Muzzle Energy	1825 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	3.6 in.

Velocity was recorded at 10 feet using an Oehler 35P chronograph with proof channel. Three-shot groups were fired at 100 yards from a machine rest.

these rifles all over the world; and in many cases just the metal parts, with the receiving country providing the stocks. I did read that there was an African country that ordered just the metal fittings, and in that country they used teak for their stocks.

I've always admired the Mauser 98, but I would not buy a German-built one because many were made with slave labor. In contrast, the M-48 was made in Yugoslavia on German machinery. **— A. Lovitz**

Thank you for the information. I still wonder what this wood is, though it greatly resembles teak. It is not beech and does not much resemble a block of ash I have here. It looks like walnut, but the seller claimed it was teak. By the way, most teak has the same density as walnut. African teak is about twice that density, and some of it does not even float. — Ray Ordorica

Status of Remington Trigger Settlement

I saw several months ago that Remington had resolved a law suit by agreeing to replace the triggers on Model 700s. Do you know anything about this and how they are administering this replacement? I have had numerous Remington 700s over the past 40 years and have had three discharges, which I assumed were my fault until reading the article. In all cases, good gun handling made the discharges nothing more than repairing a hole in my deer blind and washing the embarrassment off my face. **— William Helms**

Mr. Helms: We sent you a link to a statement by the plaintiff's attorney (Lanier Law Firm) who handled the Model 700 suit against Remington. Here's the text of a December 5, 2014, statement by the Lanier Law Firm, which corrected several factual errors made by CNBC about the trigger settlement:

"…[P]apers were filed seeking approval of a proposed settlement of two economic class-action lawsuits of certain Remington bolt-action centerfire firearms that contain either a Walker trigger mechanism, or a trigger mechanism which utilizes a 'trigger connector.'"

"The filings triggered multiple news reports that mistakenly conveyed the proposed agreement in significant fashions that require immediate clarification.

"These settlements are not recalls.

"These settlements are not any admission that the products are defective or unsafe.

"These settlements are an opportunity for any concerned consumers who have the Remington Model 700, Seven, Sportsman 78, 673, 710, 715, 770, 600, 660, XP-100, 721, 722 and 725 rifles with either a Walker trigger mechanism, or a trigger mechanism which utilizes a "trigger connector" to have Remington install a new trigger.

"The benefits under the settlement, including the trigger replacement program, will not be in place until after court approval of the settlement and full notice will go out at that time.

"This culminates from extensive mediator-supervised negotiations between lawyers for those concerned about the triggers and Remington, who while denying there is any cause for concern, always desires to ensure that its customers are satisfied with Remington products.

"A joint press release will be issued to better explain details of the proposed settlement."

On Feb. 26, 2015, I emailed J.D. Cargill, Lanier's director of marketing and communications for the Houston office, who replied, "Unfortunately, I don't know a whole lot on this yet, but I understand the settlement has stalled… but they're working on it. Sorry for not being much help." — tw

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Two Great Makers Shoot It Out: Remington Versus Colt 45 ACPs

The Big Green Commander offers credible performance for the price, but in this case, the exceptional Colt XSE edged the Remington out. But a big difference in price may give you pause.

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

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

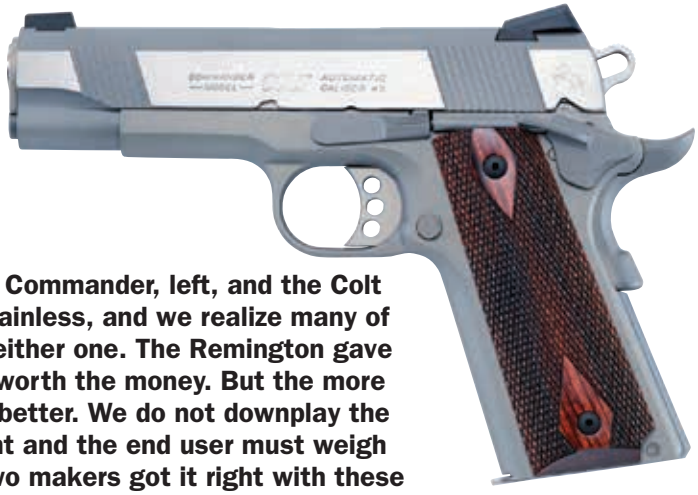
For this task, the pistol has good features, including speed to an accurate first shot that is virtually unequaled, reliability, and accuracy. Also, the 1911 is thin enough for concealed carry. The problem is a full-size gun's profile and weight. The 1911 can be concealed effectively with proper holster selection, that isn't the question. The question is the comfort level the individual is willing to accept. For many of us, the steel-frame Commander with its ¾-inch-shorter slide and barrel solves the problem. The Commander pistol is less likely to pinch the bottom when seated, and it is faster from the draw as well.

Reader Steven Mace of Arizona wrote us in April 2014 asking if we would consider testing a list of 1911A1 Commander-style pistols. He wrote, "If you or your staff has any experience with any of these pistols, I would appreciate any information that could be shared. Or, are there any plans to evaluate any of these pistols in the near future? My intent is to find and buy a 1911A1 for concealed carry for a person who is left-handed." His included list of desired handguns from top to bottom were the Colt XSE O4012XSE, Kimber Pro Raptor II 3200118, Para USA Black Ops Recon 96697, Remington 1911 R1 Carry Commander 96335, Sig Sauer 1911 Carry Scorpion 1911CAR-45-SCPN, Smith & Wesson SW1911SC 108483, and Springfield Armory Lightweight Champion Operator PX9115LP (September 2012, Grade A-). We evaluated a Kimber Tactical Pro II (Grade A) and a Carry Scorpion (Grade B+) in the October 2014 issue, and further honoring his request, in this installment we test the Colt XSE Commander and the Remington R1 Commander.



A Commander 45 is brilliantly fast getting on target, but the pistol has enough accuracy so the user can slow down and pick off small targets at various ranges. This is the R1 Commander.





We liked both the Remington R1 Commander, left, and the Colt Commander XSE O4012XSE in stainless, and we realize many of our readers would be happy with either one. The Remington gave good overall performance and is worth the money. But the more expensive Colt simply performed better. We do not downplay the difference in price. It is significant and the end user must weigh the costs. Arguably, each of the two makers got it right with these Commander handguns, and the consumer must decide.

Some guns of this size or smaller that we've tested include the SIG Sauer 1911 C3 1911CO-45-T-C3 (Grade A) and the Rock Island Armory Tactical II Compact 51479 (Grade B) in the July 2014 issue; the Dan Wesson ECO 01969 45 ACP (Grade B+) in the September 2012 issue; the SIG Sauer 1911 C3 NO. 19GS0031 (Grade A) and the Kimber Compact Stainless II 45 ACP (Grade A-) in the August 2010 issue; the Kimber SIS Ultra (Grade B+) and Springfield Armory Loaded Ultra Compact PX9161LP (Grade B-) in the August 2008 issue; and the Smith & Wesson M457 No. 104804 (Grade B) in the September 2007 issue, among others further back.

The Colt is the top-of-the-line Commander and the Remington is a less expensive R1, which actually favored the R1 when we started because we prefer less expensive products, if they perform on par with more expensive ones. We felt the comparison was valid based upon quality, accuracy and reliability, so here's what we found.

Remington R1 Commander 96336 45 ACP, $573

This was the price of our gun at the time of the test from retailer CheaperThanDirt.com. Prices may vary. It had a distinctive blued-steel-and-walnut look that has an appeal to many of us. The fit and finish were good. The barrel bushing was stainless steel and so was the trigger. The wood grips were not custom grade in terms of appearance, fit, and feel, but they were acceptable. The checkering was machine cut.

The Remington showed attention to detail in the feed-ramp polish. The proper 1/32-inch gap between the two parts of the feed ramp ensured feed reliability. The ejection port was lowered for better ejection.

The Remington used a GI-style hammer rather than the almost universal skeletonized hammer or rowel (spur-type) Commander hammer. The pistol also featured a short trigger opposite a flat mainspring housing. This was unusual, but it worked okay.

The combat-style sights were a little taller than most. The rear sight was larger than a GI sight, but it wasn't a Novak type. The front sight was dovetailed into place on the top of the slide, and we gauged them both to be well fitted.

The slide-lock safety exhibited a solid detent. The grip safety properly released its hold on the trigger about halfway into compression. During the firing of 250 rounds of ammunition, including JHP loads, with Remington, Wilson Combat, and Chip McCormick magazines, we experienced one

RANGE DATA

5.0 grains Bullseye Powder 200-gr. Semiwadcutter	**Remington R1 Commander**	**Colt XSE Commander**
Average Velocity	913 fps	922 fps
Muzzle Energy	370 ft.-lbs.	377 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	2.4 in.	1.4 in.
Largest Group	2.9 in.	1.7 in.
Average Group Size	2.6 in.	1.6 in.

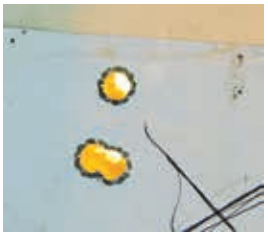
Federal HST 45 ACP 230-gr. P45HST2S	**Remington R1 Commander**	**Colt Commander**
Average Velocity	813 fps	829 fps
Muzzle Energy	337 ft.-lbs.	350 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	2.4 in.	2.0 in.
Largest Group	2.8 in.	2.5 in.
Average Group Size	2.6 in.	2.2 in.

Hornady XTP 45 ACP 200-gr. #9112	**Remington R1 Commander**	**Colt Commander**
Average Velocity	882 fps	903 fps
Muzzle Energy	345 ft.-lbs.	362 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.9 in.	1.7 in.
Largest Group	2.5 in.	2.2 in.
Average Group Size	2.2 in.	1.9 in.

To collect accuracy data, we fired three 5-shot groups from a sandbag rest at 25 yards. To capture velocity data, we used an Competition Electronics chronograph with the first skyscreen set 10 feet from the muzzle.

Ammunition Sources: *Federal 230-grain HST P45HST2S (CheaperThanDirt.com, $25.92); Hornady 200-grain XTP 9112, (CheaperThanDirt.com, $13.20).*





The Colt featured a combination of a well-designed ambidextrous safety, a beavertail grip safety, and rosewood grips, all of which contributed to a sure grip and accurate shot placement. Below is the Colt's sighting-in group at 15 yards — tight and to point of aim out of the box.

malfunction during the first shots.

This was among the oddest malfunctions we have experienced, and no one remembers quite the same thing ever occurring. The Remington fired several rounds without a problem and then had a misfeed.

There was a live round with the base rising out of the ejection port. It was angled out of the port with the nose pointing into the chamber. There was another live round attempting to feed and caught under the other live round's nose. We are not certain how this happened. After the initial hiccup, the Remington did not repeat this problem.

Trigger compression was even and free of creep at 5.0 pounds, which aided our ability to shoot groups acceptable for personal defense, but pedestrian by modern standards. The R1 Commander shot Hornady 200-grain XTPs the best, producing a 2.2-inch 25-yard group average and a best group of 1.9 inches. We feel that this is credible performance for a 4.25-inch barrel 45-caliber pistol. The worst averages were with the Federal 230-grain HST JHPs at 2.6 inches on average, and the same result for the 200-grain semi-wadcutter handload. As the accuracy table shows, the Colt did considerably better across the board, shooting average groups of 1.9, 2.2, and 1.6 inches, respectively, for the XTPs, HSTs, and SWCs.

Our Team Said: The Remington R1 Commander fired 249 rounds without a problem. The single malfunction, occurring with the first magazine, may be written off to a break-in malfunction sometimes exhibited by 1911 handguns — but the Colt did not require a break in. Also, because its controls favor right-side shooters, this would not be a pistol as suited to lefties.

Colt Commander XSE O4012XSE 45 ACP, $940

This was CheaperThanDirt.com's price at the time of the test. Though it may not seem like it, it's easy for a pistol to make a good first impression on us, and the Colt did just that. When checking sight regulation at the start of our firing phase, we shot the Colt Commander pistol off a bench rest at

COLT COMMANDER XSE O4012XSE 45 ACP, $940

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

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





This image illustrates why we carry a Commander 45 — it is lighter than a full-size pistol.



Both pistols featured flush-fit magazines. A magazine with a basebad is too big for concealed carry in many cases.

The Novak sight arrangement on the Colt offers excellent accuracy potential.





Action	Locked Breech Single-Action Semi-Auto, Series 80
Overall Length	7.75 in.
Overall Height	5.4 in.
Maximum Width	1.5 in.
Weight Unloaded	36 oz.
Weight Loaded	40.5 oz.
Barrel Length	4.25 in.
Barrel	Steel, 1:16 Twist
Capacity	8+1
Slide	Brushed Stainless Steel
Frame	Brushed Stainless Steel
Frame Front Strap Height	2.6 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.2 in.
Grips	Double Diamond Checkered Rosewood
Grip Thickness (max)	1.3 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.4 in.
Rear Sight	Steel, Two White Dot, Novak Carry
Front Sight	Steel, One White Dot, Novak Carry
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	6.0 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.5 in.
Safeties	Ambi Slide Lock; Upswept Beavertail Grip
Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Website	Colt.com
Telephone	(800) 962-COLT (2658)
Made By/In	Colt's Mfg./USA



Whether it was the Novak sights, superior grip, or frame cut out, the Colt gave better results in rapid fire.

Left: The Colt features forward cocking serrations and a full-length one-piece guide rod.

REMINGTON R1 COMMANDER 96336 45 ACP, $573

GUN TESTS GRADE: B

The Remington R1 Commander has good fit and finish. Reliability was good with personal-defense loads after a single odd malfunction during the first round of firing. This is a traditional 1911 Commander with no extraneous features.

Action	Locked Breech Single-Action Semi-Auto
Overall Length	7.75 in.
Overall Height	5.3 in.
Maximum Width	1.5 in.
Weight Unloaded	35 oz.
Weight Loaded	40 oz.
Barrel Length	4.25 in.
Barrel	Steel 1:16 Twist
Magazine	8-Rd. Detachable Box
Slide	Blued Steel
Frame	Blued Steel
Frame Front Strap Height	2.6 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.2 in.
Grips	Checkered Wood
Grip Thickness (max)	1.5 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.5 in.
Sights	Low Mount
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	5.0 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.4 in.
Safety	Slide Lock Safety, Grip Safety
Warranty	Limited 2 year
Website	Remington.com
Telephone	(800) 243-9700
Made By/In	Remington Arms Co./NC





The Remington R1 is a clean design. If you don't like or want bells and whistles, this gun may suit you, and the price is right. The Remington would be a great rough and ready outdoors handgun, and it will fit more budgets than the Colt.





The Remington's malfunction during the first magazine wasn't surprising, but the malfunction type was. After some study at the range, we cleared the jam and had no further problems. Against a different gun, we might have graded it higher.



The Remington's front sight is neatly dovetailed in place. This isn't going to work loose. The Remington sights are what we once referred to as "high profile." This was a desirable modification prior to 1980 or so.

15 yards. The rater fired three rounds to test the relationship between the sight picture and point of impact, then he walked to the target.

Result: Two rounds in the same hole and the other very close and directly on point of aim. That's a good start.

The Colt Commander XSE is Colt's top-end Commander. For a few hundred more dollars above the Remington R1 you get a full-length guide rod, Novak sights, forward cocking serrations, and nicely checkered custom-grade rosewood grips. The hammer was a lightweight skeletonized version which we often find on higher-end guns.

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

During disassembly, we noted the barrel bushing fit was tight, and the barrel locking lugs were well fitted. We saw little lateral play in-the-slide-to-frame fit. The slide-lock safety and the grip safety each exhibited positive function.

The Colt featured a cut out just under the trigger guard that slightly lowers the bore axis, resulting in a better fit for some shooters. During the combat-firing stage, the Colt handled better than the Remington, in our opinion, turning in marginally better combat groups.

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

Written and photographed by R.K. Campbell, using evaluations from Gun Tests *team testers.* **GT**

High-Capacity 357 Magnum Carry Revolvers from S&W

Are 8-shot revolvers worth extra money for two rounds? We compare three Smith & Wesson revolvers to find out: the M627 and M327 from the Performance Center and a veteran 686.

Like so many other shooters, our evaluators like the 357 Magnum cartridge for defense as well as the flexibility of lower-recoil and lower-cost training using 38 Special ammunition. To see if we could find a bargain, we wanted to pit two expensive high-capacity snubnose revolvers in that chambering—the Models 327 and 627—and add into the mix a more traditional, affordable used six-shot snubnose, the Model 686 164231, which is no longer in current production but which is widely available from around $600 to $800.



Whole lotta chambers going on with these two newer Smith & Wesson Performance Center revolvers. The Model 627 ($1079) on the left and the S&W Performance Center Model 327 ($1309) on right are both 8-shot revolvers that offer a fist full of 357 Magnum power. Are they better than a classic like the 6-shot S&W Model 686 ($600-$850)?

The 6-shot Model 686 is the stainless-steel version of the Model 586, which debuted in 1981 and was one of the first L-frame or medium-sized revolvers offered by S&W. The L-frame guns are slimmer and lighter than the hefty N-frames. Both the Model 586 and the Model 686 were immensely popular with law enforcement, outdoorsmen, competition shooters, and home defenders. The 586 went out of production but was reintroduced a few years ago. The Model 686 is a pure S&W classic that is able to withstand continued use of 357 Magnum ammo. We have reviewed the 686 in various configurations in past issues, such as the 2.5- (No. 164192, Grade A January 2002), 4- (No. 164194, Grade A March 2007), 6- (No. 164224, Grade A- March 2011), and 8.4-inch (Grade A February 2001) barrels and the Plus variant (M686-6, Grade A January 2002), which has a 7-shot capacity, and all have been excellent revolvers. We have also reviewed the Model 327 in the past (Grade B February 2005). The snubnose revolver new to our team is the Performance Center Model 627.

Smith & Wesson introduced the first, the original, 357 Magnum revolver in 1935 known as the Registered Magnum. S&W chose to chamber the powerful 357 Magnum cartridge in a six-shot revolver built from the company's large, heavy-duty carbon-steel N-frame. Almost immediately, the Registered Magnum was adopted by the Kansas City Police Department, and other LE agencies soon followed. To say the revolver and cartridge combination was successful is an understatement. When introduced at the height of the Great Depression, the revolver cost $60 — nearly a king's ransom in those days. Yet Smith & Wesson had a hard time filling these special-order items because the big N-frame had a lot of desirable details, such as a pinned barrel, counterbored cylinder chambers, and checkering across the top strap of the frame and barrel.

Over the years, the revolver went through several name changes. In the late 1930s, the model name was changed to ".357 Magnum." Eventually, it would become known as the Model 27 when S&W started to use numeric model names in the mid-1950s.

General George S. Patton carried a 357 Magnum model and outfitted it with ivory grips and a Tyler T-grip to fill that gap between the rear of the trigger guard and front strap. He called it his "killing gun." From the 1940s through the 1960s, many FBI agents used a 3.5-inch-barrel model. J. Edgar Hoover is said to have owned one of the first Registered Magnums. Noted gun writer Skeeter Skelton was known to favor a 5-inch-barrel model. In 1994, the M27 was dropped by S&W, and wheelgun aficionados gasped with despair. Around 2009, the Model 27 was reintroduced.

In that gap when Model 27

production went dark, S&W brought out the Model 627 in 1996. Following a similar introduction as the Registered Magnum, the Model 627 is a semi-custom gun produced by S&W's Performance Center. S&W enhanced the Model 627, making it an 8-shot 357 Magnum. In 2008, another 8-shot N-frame debuted, the Model 327. These two models are direct descendants of the Registered Magnum, and these newer-generation guns offer added capacity and are constructed of different materials.

To find out how they were all put together, first we used Brownell's revolver range rod for 38/357 Service (080-617-038WB, $40) on the used 686 to check the alignment of the six chambers and the barrel. The rod slid down the barrel and into each chamber, so we were confident that the 686, though used, would still perform. We also checked the new 627 and 327, and all their chambers checked out. We used a Go/No Go 60/68 Cylinder Gauge (080-633-668WB, $36) from Brownells to check the headspace on the revolvers, which is the gap between the rear of the cylinder and recoil plate in frame. The used 686 was in spec. If the gap is too big, the revolver may misfire. The new revolvers were in spec, too. All revolvers exhibited a tight lock up of cylinder to frame. The full-size, old-style cylinder latch was loose on the 686, but a flat-blade screwdriver took care of that issue.

Handling the revolvers, team members soon gravitated to certain ones. All had excellent finishes; even the used 686 looked as if it has held up well to constant use. We also concealed-carried the revolvers to get a better understanding of how they felt in day-to-day use. In the end, the team members ranked the Smiths by which one they would carry concealed most comfortably.

S&W Performance Center Model 627 170133 357 Magnum, $1079

There's something about a N-frame 357 Magnum that endears itself to users, and the Model 627 is one of

S&W PERFORMANCE CENTER MODEL 627 170133 357 MAGNUM, $1079

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

The 627 is a well-made, nice-shooting revolver with details like a ball-detent lock up, chamfered chambers, and excellent sights.





Note that the chambers are chamfered for ease in loading and are cut out for a moonclip.



This triple-checked, unloaded handgun is shown to illustrate handfit, thus the shooter's finger is on the trigger.

The grip of 627 was small and well suited for concealed carry; most shooters tucked their small fingers under the butt.



The sight picture of the 627 (shown) was very similar to the 686, except the 686 did not have the white outline around the notch.



Right: The V-shaped groove in the 627's frame is what the ball detent locks into.

Action	Double Action
Overall Length	7.6 in.
Overall Height	5.5 in.
Maximum Width (Cylinder)	1.7 in.
Weight Unloaded	37.6 oz.
Weight Loaded	40.8 oz.
Barrel Length	2.6 in.
Capacity	8
Frame Material/Size	Stainless Steel/ Large N-frame
Cylinder Material	Stainless Steel, Non-Fluted
Frame Front Strap Height	1.8 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.9 in.
Grips	Checkered Walnut
Grip Thickness (max)	1.1 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.3 in.
Front Sight	Serrated Ramp
Rear Sight	Adjustable White Outline
Sight Radius	4.5 in.
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	4.1 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight Double Action	11.5 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.8 in.
Trigger Span Double Action	3.3 in.
Safety	Transfer Bar
Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Telephone	(800) 331-0852
Website	Smith-Wesson.com
Made In	Springfield, Mass.



Above: The 627's grip at left was noticeably smaller than the full-size grip of 327, right.

those revolvers. Constructed of stainless steel with a matte finish, it was the heaviest of all three firearms tested, more than 40 ounces. The Performance Center's attention to detail—tight fitting, clean metalwork, smooth woodwork—was all over the handgun.

The 2.6-inch-long barrel was slab sided, which gave the revolver less bulk. The muzzle was nicely crowned, but at the outside edge of the barrel we found a sharp surface that would need to be filed off, in our opinion, to make reholstering the 627 slightly easier. The full ejector shroud had a cutout to relieve some material and weight as well as allow any debris like mud or snow to easily be removed. However, whatever weight loss was due to the ejector shroud cut out was negated by the unfluted cylinder. We think if S&W wanted to slightly lighten the 627, fluting is an option.

The top of the barrel was serrated to cut glare, and the front sight was dovetailed into the barrel. We liked the dovetail front sight because it could easily be swapped out. Testers agreed they would keep the original red ramp front sight because it was quick to acquire a target. The rear sight was fully adjustable and matte black. The rear blade's notch had a white outline. Of the revolvers tested, we liked these sights the best. It made the revolver less smooth and snag free compared to the 327, but that was not a show stopper.

In hand, the small grip was slim and fit most testers quite well. Grips with pronounced finger grooves have a way of not fitting all hand sizes, like the 686's grip, which we will get to. The grip of 627 ended at the revolver's frame, and the frame's back strap was exposed. Nicely checkered sections of wood were on each grip panel. The left panel was scooped out for ease of use with a speedloader. The grip reminded testers of the Secret Service grip from Eagle Grips. For concealability, this is the grip most testers gave an approving nod to compared to the grips on the 686 and the 327.

The trigger was smooth faced, and the 11-pound pull actually felt lighter than the scale indicated. A trigger stop was built into the trigger. The hammer was teardrop shaped and had an aggressive texture that assisting us in cocking it. Both the trigger and the hammer had a chrome-flashed finish that matched the stainless finish of the rest of the revolver. The double-action trigger span wasn't too big, so even shooters with small hands could easily fire the 627, 327, and 686 revolvers in double action as well as transition from one gun to other.

The cylinder latch was the newer type, cut for ease of use with speedloaders. Chambers were chamfered to aid in reloading, and the ejector and the rear of the cylinder were cut to allow use of moon clips. The ejector rod was long enough to purge empty brass from the cylinder. Team members like this rod length, particularly when 8 rounds need to be ejected all at once.

A detail that separated the Performance Center revolvers from the standard 686 was a ball detent built into the front of the crane. The ball bearing locks into a V-shaped groove in the frame. This is an accuracy enhancement long used by PPC shooters customizing revolvers for competition. Both the 627 and 327 locked up tight due to

357 MAGNUM RANGE DATA

Winchester White Box 38 Special +P 125-gr. JHP	S&W PC Model 627	S&W PC Model 327	S&W Model 686
Average Velocity	963 fps	889 fps	898 fps
Muzzle Energy	258 ft.-lbs.	219 ft.-lbs.	224 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	0.7 in.	1.3 in.	1.4 in.
Average Group	1.4 in.	1.5 in.	1.9 in.

Winchester White Box 357 Magnum 110-gr. JHP	S&W PC Model 627	S&W PC Model 327	S&W Model 686
Average Velocity	1116 fps	1141 fps	1229 fps
Muzzle Energy	304 ft.-lbs.	318 ft.-lbs.	369 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.1 in.	1.3 in.	1.8 in.
Average Group	1.3 in.	1.4 in.	2.3 in.

Federal Tactical 128-gr. Hydra-Shok JHP	S&W PC Model 627	S&W PC Model 327	S&W Model 686
Average Velocity	1174 fps	1173 fps	1177 fps
Muzzle Energy	392 ft.-lbs.	391 ft.-lbs.	394 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.1 in.	1.5 in.	1.2 in.
Average Group	1.5 in.	1.6 in.	1.9 in.

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



Note how much larger the grip of the 327 on the right is compared to the 627 on the left. The six-shot 686's grip was about the same size as the 327's.

this feature. The 686 locked in the front via a detent into a hole at the end of the ejector rod.

In hand, both of the N-frames stood taller than the L-frame 686. The 627 was the heaviest revolver of the trio and that extra weight made the 627 more pleasant to shoot even with the abbreviated grip. Usually, we had to tuck our small fingers under the grip to get the most comfort.

Before shooting the 627, our team thought it was going to be a handful with 357 Magnum loads. In fact, it was very tolerable due to the excellent grip and the weight. At 15 yards, we fired for accuracy using a rest with Winchester White Box 357 Magnum 110-grain JHPs, and 38 Special +P 125-grain JHP ammo as well as Federal Tactical 128-grain Hydra-Shok JHPs. Looking at past ballistic and accuracy data from 4-inch-barrel revolvers, we saw the Winchester 357 Magnum ammo was about 200 fps to 300 fps slower out of these snubnose revolvers. Felt recoil was noticeable with all ammunition fired. In DA mode, firing for speed, the 627 was easier to stay on and get back on target due its heft and sights. There was a ramp up time to get used to pulling the trigger eight times, not a hard thing to learn.

We used moon clips with the 627, and the eight cartridges took a bit more time to reload, at times, compared to the six cartridges in the 686. Aligning the rounds into the chambers at times required wiggling the moon clip, our team found.

Testers liked to shoot the 627, but concealed-carrying the 627 was a different story. The 627 was comparable in weight to a 1911 steel frame fully loaded, but the pistol was slightly thicker than a typical 1911, 1.7 inches compared to 1.3 inches, respectively. The 327 was comparable in thickness to the 627, while the 686 was thinner at 1.5 inches. That extra girth was noticeable, and team members resorted to carrying the 627 in an outside-the-waist-band holster as a result.

Our Team Said: With the correct holster and belt, the Model 627 makes a good

S&W PERFORMANCE CENTER MODEL 327 170245
357 MAGNUM, $1309
GUN TESTS GRADE: B

The Model 327 needed a different grip to be concealed carried efficiently, and the short ejector rod caused us to rely on gravity for fast reloads.





The ball detent in the 327's crane locks into the V-shaped groove in the frame (arrow).



Details like the chamfered chambers and cut out for moonclips are features that drive the cost and the performance of both Performance Center guns.



This light N-frame has a 2-inch barrel, titanium cylinder, and scandium frame.

Action	Double Action
Overall Length	7.0 in.
Overall Height	6.1 in.
Maximum Width (Cylinder)	1.7 in.
Weight Unloaded	21.5 oz.
Weight Loaded	24.7 oz.
Barrel Length	2.0 in.
Capacity	8
Frame Material/Size	Scandium Alloy, Large N-frame
Cylinder Material	Titanium, Fluted
Frame Front Strap Height	2.5 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	4.0 in.
Grips	Checkered wood
Grip Thickness (max)	1.1 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.5 in.
Front Sight	Red Ramp
Rear Sight	Fixed groove
Sight Radius	4.0 in.
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	4.3 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight Double Action	12 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.9 in.
Trigger Span Double Action	3.4 in.
Safety	Transfer Bar
Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Telephone	(800) 331-0852
Website	Smith-Wesson.com
Made In	Springfield, Mass.



The two 8-shooters side-by-side show the long sight radius and more user friendly sights of the 627 (left) compared to the fixed-groove rear sight and red ramp on the 327.

concealed-carry sidearm and trail gun, but you will probably need to wear a cover garment. The price is high, but that is because this revolver has features like a dovetailed front sight, chamfered chambers, and trigger stop. The weight and girth of revolver would make it heavy, but it is comparable to the weight of a 1911 and holds the same number of rounds as many 1911 magazines.

S&W Performance Center Model 327 170245 357 Magnum, $1309

The Model 327 is another 8-shot N-frame out of the Performance Center, but without the heft of the Model 627. In fact this was the lightest revolver of the three tested at only 24.7 ounces loaded. To achieve that light weight, the 327 is constructed with a scandium frame, steel barrel sleeve, a titanium cylinder and barrel shroud, and a 2-inch barrel. The cylinder and barrel shroud wore a light gray finish, while the frame had a contrasting matte-black tone. If weight were the sole criteria for getting in our good graces, the 327 would have won hands down.

The Model 327 actually looks as if it has been "Fitz'd." John Henry Fitzgerald was a Colt employee in the 1920s and 1930s who chopped up Colt's large-frame revolvers for concealed carry. Where Fitz Colts were customized with smaller barrels and grips, among other features, the 327 had a full-size grip, which was odd for a concealed-carry handgun.

The 327's barrel had chiseled edges at the muzzle, which assisted in reholstering. The short barrel had a red-ramp front sight dovetailed in, and the rear sight was a groove along the top of the frame. The team liked the dovetailed front sight since it could be replaced to match a certain load because the 327 did not have an adjustable sight. The ejector-rod shroud had a cutout.

The revolver's surface was snag free, more so than the 627 and 686. Like the 627, the 327 had a smooth trigger face with a built-in trigger stop and a teardrop-shaped hammer, but these parts had a casehardened-type finish. The trigger was exceptionally smooth and did not feel like it took 12 pounds to fire the 327 in DA mode. The new-style cylinder latch was easy to manipulate, and the cylinder closed with authority. A ball detent was also used in the 327 to lock up the front of the cylinder to the frame, same as the 627.

S&W MODEL 686 357 MAGNUM, $600-$850
GUN TESTS GRADE: A

The 686 is a well-designed revolver, and team members liked the slender 686 even though it had less capacity.





Action	Double Action
Overall Length	7.5 in.
Overall Height	5.87 in.
Maximum Width (Cylinder)	1.5 in.
Weight Unloaded	34.7 oz.
Weight Loaded	37.1 oz.
Barrel Length	2.5 in.
Capacity	6
Frame Material/Size	Stainless Steel/ Medium L-frame
Cylinder Material	Stainless Steel, Fluted
Frame Front Strap Height	2.5 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	4.4 in.
Grips	Smooth Finger Grooves
Grip Thickness (max)	1.4 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.3 in.
Front Sight	Red Ramp
Rear Sight	Adjustable, White Outline
Sight Radius	3.4 in.
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	6.0 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight Double Action	12 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.8 in.
Trigger Span Double Action	3.2 in.
Safety	Transfer Bar
Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Telephone	(800) 331-0852
Website	Smith-Wesson.com
Made In	Springfield, Mass.

Above: The front lock up is at the end of the ejector rod, with a detent inside the ejector shroud. Even after years of use, the crane still fit tightly into the frame of the 686.





The old-style hammer spur has a big toothy pad for your thumb.



The backstrap on the 686 was serrated, which provided a slightly better grip, especially with the smooth wood grips. The left side of the grip was scooped out to allow use of a speedloader, and they had a nice palm swell.



The 686 did not have chamfered chambers or a moonclip cut out.

The ejector rod on the 327 was as abbreviated as the barrel, and gravity was a necessary ally when ejecting empty brass. Shooters preferred the longer ejection rods on the 627 and the 686. Getting the empty cases out could be an issue with the 327, but in most deadly encounters, only a few shots are fired. Thus, the 8-shot capacity of the 327 might be okay since reloading might not be required. Chambers were chamfered and the rear cylinder face and ejector rods were machined to accept moonclips.

As noted, the 327 had a full-size grip, which meant our shooters did not have a pinky finger dangling off these wood grips. Like the 627's grips, the 327's grip was well fitted to the round-butt N-frame. The wood grip panels were stippled texture, and the back strap was exposed. The revolver felt like a full-size gun in the hand, but looking down the sights it seemed to be missing some length. We expected the 327 to have more felt recoil than the steel revolvers, and we were spot on. With hot 357 Magnum loads, the 327 rapped the web and palm of our hands. If we bought this gun, we would replace the grips of the 327 with the grips from the 627 or with a set of rubber grips made for maximum concealability. The trade off, of course, is a large grip is more comfortable to shoot, but they are not as concealable.

The sights were fast on target and not nearly as refined as the adjustable sights on the other two revolvers, but this revolvers is made for close-range work. Accuracy with the 327, 627, and 686 all averaged about 1.5 inches with five-shot groups, which is more than adequate at self-defense distances under 25 yards.

We had the same wiggle issues while loading cartridges with the 327 as we did with the 627. Cartridges in a moonclip sometimes took a bit longer to load until all the cartridges aligned in the chambers. If the chambers were not chamfered, we suspect it would take even longer to reload. After extended shooting and no cleaning, cases started to stick in the chambers and the stubby ejector needed gravity to empty the gun.

For carry, we used the same holster as for the 627 and enjoyed carrying the 327 more because it weighed less. The large grip was an issue, however, and took more garment to hide.

Our Team Said: The Model 327 is pleasant to carry and unpleasant to shoot. Team members did not like the grip and were confused why S&W would make a concealed-carry revolver with such a large grip.

S&W Model 686 357 Magnum, ~$600-$850 (Used)

The used 686 felt small in hand after shooting the N-frames. The details that were in the Performance Center models were missing from the 686. The 686 uses S&W's standard L-frame made of stainless steel and is a 6-shooter. The bright finish was glossy compared to the 627's matte-stainless finish.

Even with years of use, this 686 was still very tight. The 2.5-inch barrel had a full underlug that completely shrouded the ejector rod. The top side of the barrel had a red-ramp front sight machined into the barrel. The rear sight was matte black with no white outline, and it was fully adjustable — a real treat after shooting the 327.

The cylinder was fluted, and like the other revolvers, we would want a better chamfer on the front edge of the cylinder to aid reholstering. The cylinder locked up via the end of the ejector rod. The end of the ejector rod on the 686, like the other S&Ws tested, was knurled so it gripped the palm of our hand when ejecting empties. The chambers were not chamfered, nor was it set up to use moonclips. It was, however, the easiest revolver to reload quickly. The rounds, even without the chamfer, slid into the chambers faster using a speedloader.

The backstrap was exposed and had serrations that help the user grip the revolver since the wood finger groove grips were smooth. The left side was scooped out to allow use of a speedloader, and they had a nice palm swell. These grips caused some users to either grip the revolver high or low. Drawing the revolver from a holster, the user needed to be sure he got the grip right. We would deep-six these grips, too.

The trigger was smooth and had a nice, consistent pull. The hammer had a full-size spur with a toothy checkered texture. Thumbing back the hammer gave the user a confident feeling in its action.

Some team members believed the 686 felt better in hand because it is slender and did not stand as tall as the N-frames. They felt the 686 was easier to control as well. Felt recoil with the 686 was tolerable. Shooters fell into the 6-shot rhythm with 686 naturally. When shooting the 627 or 327, some shooters missed counted shots, but that is an issue easily fixed with more training. Testers also felt there was less muzzle flip with the 686, since the bore was slightly lower in the hand than the bores on the 627 and 327.

Tuff Products Quickstrips and HKS speedloaders were used with the 686 rather than moonclips, and we found the speedloaders were slightly faster to reload. Testers felt they would carry a Quickstrip since it would lay flat in a pants pocket. If they were wearing a jacket or coat, they'd opt for the bulkier HKS speedloader.

Concealed carry could be accomplished with an IWB holster, and that is how team members would carry the 686. It offered less bulk with the compromise of two fewer rounds. If the extra weight of the 627 or the slightly larger girth of both the 327 and 627 is not an issue, nor the retail price, then the 8-shooters are an option.

Our Team Said: Even with only 6 shots, the performance of the 686 garnered praise from our testers. All the revolvers showed about the same accuracy, and no revolver seemed to prefer one brand of ammo over the other. Carrying the 686 was in the middle between the 327 on the light side and the 627 on the heavy side. For the cost, most testers would opt for the 686 for a carry gun.

Written and photographed by Robert Sadowski, using evaluations from Gun Tests *team testers.* **GT**

12 Gauges: Browning Citori Crossover v. Franchi Instinct SL

In this case, a little more money provided slightly better performance on the target range and in the field, with the new over/under by Browning edging the less expensive Franchi.

There is an old saying that competitors should "beware the one who uses one gun," meaning that a shooter who does everything with the same shotgun probably is very familiar with how the firearm handles in a variety of shooting situations.

Knowing what that one gun can and cannot do, plus being able to repeatedly and effectively put that firearm to good use, gives a shooter the edge in both the field and on a clay target range.

In today's high-tech world, finding that all-around over and under shotgun has become increasingly difficult. Most firearms are specialized for a certain use—a target gun probably doesn't perform as effectively on game as a field gun; and field guns can't seem to match the target-busting ability of a shotgun made for clays.

A Gun Tests reader in Pennsylvania, Randy Cornman, had asked us for a head-to-head test of the "new" Ruger Red Label shotgun at $1,800 against the new Browning Citori Crossover Target with an MSRP of $2,000. He said, "It's time for a real knock-down, drag-out, head-to-head comparison. Both with 30-inch barrels, of course. We need at least 500 to 1,000 shots apiece. With all glitches detailed." Apparently, we acted too slowly to get ahead of Ruger, which we learned last month was discontinuing the Red Label line for a second time. So in its place we substituted a much less expensive Franchi Instinct SL to see if the SL could out duel its pricier counterpart. Both shotguns retail for less than $2,000 and are marketed as being able to handle duties on both birds in the field and clays at the range.



Because of its heavier weight, the Browning Citori Crossover Target, being shot, was better suited for the larger members of our test team, but still proved to be a good shooting tool even for our shooters with a slighter build. The Franchi Instinct SL was whippy, and felt recoil with the SL was higher than when we put the Browning through its paces.



At a reader's request, we selected a couple of new shotguns that have been advertised as affordable all-round firearms to see how they performed on clays and in the field. Both recently released by their manufacturers and with a price tag of under $2,000 were the Browning Citori Crossover Target, left, that was specifically requested by a reader, and a Franchi Instinct SL, which we substituted for the now-discontinued Ruger Red Label.

For our patterning tests of the two 12-gauge over-and-unders, we selected Winchester AA Extra-Light Target

BROWNING CITORI CROSSOVER TARGET NO. 018015302 12 GAUGE, $1999

GUN TESTS GRADE: A- (OUR PICK)

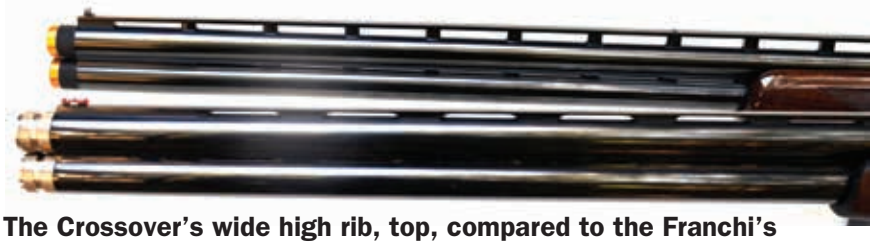
We found the Browning performed as advertised. It would be a good choice for a shooter interested in acquiring a moderately priced, solid and dependable all-around shotgun.



Action Type	Over/Under
Chamber Size	3 in.
Overall Length	47.0 in.
Capacity	2
Weight (Unloaded)	8 lbs.
Barrel Length	30.0 in.
Barrel	Polished Blued Steel, Chrome Plated
Receiver	Polished Blued, Gold Engraved
Choke Tubes	Invector Plus Extended Midas Grade (IC, M, F)
Stock	Checkered Walnut, Gloss Oil Finish, Grade I/II
Buttstock Length of Pull (Adjustable)	14 to 14.7 in.
Buttstock Drop @ Comb	1.5 in.
Buttstock Drop @ Heel	2.0 in.
Forearm	Checkered Walnut, Gloss Oil Finish, Grade I/II
Front Bead	Ivory
Rear Bead	Ivory
Rib	⅜ in. High Post
Trigger Pull Weight Bottom	5 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight Top	5.5 lbs.
Trigger Finish	Gold Plated
Warranty	Limited
Telephone	(800) 333-3288
Website	Browning.com
Made In/Assembled In	Japan

A very good feature in most higher-priced Brownings is the easily adjustable inertia trigger, which allowed us to fit the length of pull for everyone in our test group. Different trigger styles are available from Browning — another plus for the Crossover.





The Crossover's wide high rib, top, compared to the Franchi's standard rib, provided our team a better sighting plane when aligning the barrel with the targets. High ribs are becoming very popular among clay target shooters, and the Crossover takes advantage of that popularity.

The Midas Grade extended chokes provided with the Crossover, as compared with the typical internal chokes supplied with most moderately priced shotguns, were considered another edge for the Browning.



2.75-inch loads packing 1 ounce of No. 8 shot with an average muzzle velocity of 1,190 fps. We also used the Winchesters during our field and clay target sessions, in addition to Kemen Premium Sport 2.75-inch loads with ⅞ ounce of No. 7½ shot with an average muzzle velocity of 1,340 fps.

Both shotguns handled both types of shells in the field and on the clay target range without a hitch. As more thoroughly covered below, the felt recoil was slightly higher with both loads when shooting the lighter-weight Franchi. Here are our findings:

Browning Citori Crossover Target No. 018015302 12 Gauge, $1999

Available in limited distribution, the new Citori is the latest in a long line of over-and-under shotguns that date back to the creative mind of firearm genius John M. Browning. The legendary inventor revolutionized the double-gun shooting world with the creation of the Superposed model that can still be found in use today, more than eight decades after the first one ended up in the hands of a U.S. shooter. The Crossover model is just the latest creation released by the company as a way of filling the need for a moderately priced firearm capable of handling multiple duties.

We found the heft of the Crossover to be both good news and bad news for our shooting crew. For the smaller members, the 8-pound over-and-under seemed a little unwieldy at first and required a little break-in time. However, we found that the good news with the weight was a noticeable reduction in felt recoil.

With its 30-inch barrels and overall length of 47 inches, the smoothing factor in gliding through targets was also a plus. The ⅜-inch-wide high post rib provided a good sighting plane for acquiring targets, as advertised.

Although at first glance we were concerned about the proper fit for the smaller members of our test team, the adjustable trigger allowed for an easy fit, with a length-of-pull range from 14 inches out to 14.75 inches. The Browning had a drop at the comb

of 1.5 inches and a drop at the heel of 2 inches, which was typical for an out-of-the-box shotgun. Those dimensions provided a smooth-handling platform for our team.

The palm swell on the grip was a nice touch, normally found in a higher-priced model, and we were pleased with the way it helped control the shotgun in moving through targets.

A check of the trigger found a touch off of 5 pounds for the bottom barrel and 5.5 pounds for the top. Both were well within our feel-good range. As experienced shooters have discovered, a heavy trigger pull can cause unnecessary gun movement off a target.

Moving to the patterning board range, we fired both Improved Cylinder and Modified chokes at a distance of 30 yards to test out the Browning's performance on paper. Advertised as designed to produce a 60-40 pattern (60 percent above the center and 40 percent below), we found both the improved cylinder choke and modified chokes patterned at 57 percent over 43 percent.

We also found that the Browning put 57 percent of both patterns in the 20-inch center ring with no holes in the shot spread. That is a very nice center punch that meant targets of both the feathered and clay kind were hit hard when the shooter put the barrels in the right place at the right time — something we were able to do very consistently.

Our Team Said: Another solid offering by the veteran firearm manufacturer, the Browning Crossover is nearly at the top end of what we would consider as the moderately priced category of all-around shotguns. We feel it is worth the price. We found the Browning performed as advertised; met our expectations on the patterning board and on the range; and would be a good choice for a shooter interested in an all-round shooting tool.

Franchi Instinct SL No. 40815 12 Gauge, $1699

From the first time we handled the Franchi, we felt the lightweight and quick-handling shotgun was more suited for field work than for busting clays. While attractive and serving as a good hold for moving the shotgun onto targets, the Prince of Wales–style pistol grip on the Franchi is more commonly found on field guns than scatterguns in the hands

FRANCHI INSTINCT SL NO. 40815 12 GAUGE, $1699

GUN TESTS GRADE: B+

For the price, we think the Franchi is a fine over-and-under shotgun quite capable of meeting the needs of most shooters. We were disappointed in its patterning, and we recommend that shooters stick to lighter loads to cut back on recoil.



Action Type	Over/Under
Chamber Size	3 in.
Overall Length	45.25 in.
Capacity	2
Weight (Unloaded)	5.5 lbs.
Barrel Length	28 in.
Barrel	Polished Blued Steel
Receiver	Brushed Aluminum Alloy
Choke Tubes	Extended (I, M, F)
Buttstock	Checkered Turkish Walnut, Prince of Wales Grip
Buttstock Length of Pull	14.5 in.
Buttstock Drop @ Comb	1.5 in.
Buttstock Drop @ Heel	2.5 in.
Forearm	Checkered Turkish Walnut
Front Bead	Red Fiber Optic
Rib Width	0.25 in.
Trigger Pull Weight (Bottom)	4.5 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight (Top)	5.0 lbs.
Warranty	7-Year Limited
Telephone	(800) 264-4952
Website	FranchiUSA.com
Imported By	Benelli
Made In	Italy



Although not adjustable like the Browning, the silver-plated trigger of the Franchi did its job well. We were particularly pleased with the touch-off of 4.5 pounds on the bottom barrel and 5 pounds on the top.



Composed of aluminum alloy and with very nice jeweled metalwork on the internal parts, we liked the look of the Franchi receiver and consider it very attractive for a moderately priced shotgun.



We liked the feel and look of the Prince of Wales grip; it was a nice touch normally available in higher priced models.



Right: While not a Schnabel forearm, the Crossover's grip was slim and easy to hold, with very nice checkering and a good finish.

The Franchi's automatic safety returns the firearm to the safe position when the action is opened. That is a plus for field work, but a pain for use on clay targets. If a shooter can remember to take the shotgun off safety, there should be no problem. If not, we recommend a trip to the gunsmith to easily and inexpensively remedy the issue.

of clay-target shooters.

We particularly noted the light weight of the shotgun, which tipped the scales at just 5.5 pounds and had an overall length of 45.25 inches. One of the factors for the weight reduction was the brushed aluminum receiver, which knocks quite a bit of the heft out of the 12 gauge. Unfortunately, a lightweight 12 typically produces more felt recoil when the shooter touches off a shot, and the Franchi lived up to that reputation.

With both types of ammunition, the felt recoil was greater with the Franchi than with the Browning. We did not attempt to fire any heavy game loads — both shotguns will handle up to 3-inch shells — but we are confident that any pheasant, duck, or goose load would have quite an impact on the shoulder pocket of even a hardened shooter.

The Franchi's 28-inch barrels are topped with a standard ¼-inch rib and a red-optic front sight, providing our team with a fine sighting plane. The drop at the comb was 1.5 inches, and the drop at the heel was 2.5 inches, which allowed the shotgun to fit into a easy-handling category.

Very close to the Browning in the trigger touch-off measurements, the pull of 4.5 pounds for the bottom trigger and 5 pounds for the top was considered very good for a moderately priced over and under.

When we moved onto the patterning range, we were not quite as satisfied with the performance of the Franchi as we were with the Browning. Testing the shotgun at the same range of 30 yards as used with the Browning, the Franchi's Modified choke produced a 37-63 percent pattern, with 84 percent of the shot in the 20-inch center; and a 45-55 percent pattern with the Improved Cylinder choke, putting 59 percent of the shot in the 20-inch center.

In addition to shooting lower than we would have liked, both of the Franchi chokes also left at least one hole in the pattern. The Modified choke produced a 3-inch hole high left in the pattern, and the Improved Cylinder produced a 3-inch hole high right. We do not believe this lack of a perfect pattern is a deal breaker, but we noted its performance was not as impressive as that of the Browning.

The recoil was our biggest concern with the Franchi, which as noted earlier, was 2.5 pounds lighter than the Browning. The Franchi was a little less smooth and just a little whippy, compared to the Browning, and even with the lighter loads, the felt recoil was just slightly under the uncomfortable level.

Our Team Said: Ranked as an all-round shotgun, the Franchi was slightly below the standard set by the Browning. That said, for the price (a nice orange-colored plastic case is included in the package), this is a fine over-and-under shotgun very capable of meeting the needs of most shooters looking for a general-purpose firearm. We would recommend that shooters stick to lighter loads to cut back on the recoil if they are sensitive to shoulder shock. But even at a $300 premium, we preferred the Crossover.

Written and photographed by Ralph Winingham, using evaluations from Gun Tests *team testers.* **GT**

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Battle Rifles: Beretta's New-Age ARX 100 vs. Colt's LE6920 AR

There is no denying that the ARX 100 is a flashy competitor to the stodgy AR-15 self-defense rifle. Both were reliable, and our shooters could shoot them both fast. But one had an edge.

If we were a rifle maker with a line of AR-15s, we might put up a neon sign outside our establishment that had an image of our carbine with a simple message below: "Millions and millions sold." Because while that might not quite be true for an individual maker's line, it is certainly true for the ArmaLite Rifle platform collectively. The various configurations of ARs are among the highest-selling rifle designs ever, and their appeal seems to keep broadening, even in the face of political restrictions in some jurisdictions.

Despite this popularity—or perhaps because of it—other designs suited for self defense want to take the AR down a notch, make a little cheddar for themselves at the expense of the standard defense rifle of our time. One such competitor *du jour* is the Beretta ARX 100, itself an adaptation of the successful ARX 160 military rifle made by the famous Italian gunmaker. The ARX 160 service rifle has shown up in several war zones, and it certainly is not an M16/M4/AR-15 rifle. In fact, the ARX platform has little in common with the AR, which could be a significant hurdle for commercial success, or perhaps the beginning of the next big thing. Which one is what we aimed to find out when we went shopping for a 5.56 NATO–chambered Beretta ARX 100 JXR11B00, $1522, a recent online price for the rifle at TombstoneTactical.com. We put it against a Colt M4 Carbine LE6920SOCOM, $1622, which we recently priced at a Houston-based firearms and floral-design store called Texas Guns and Roses (TexasGunsandRoses.com). This price also includes a $15 handling fee for online orders.



A diverse team of raters evaluated two good semi-auto rifles that sell for premium prices. Top is the Beretta ARX 100, a good-looking rifle that proved to be fairly accurate and perfectly reliable. Its ergonomics and ambidextrous operation are unprecedented. Though the ARX 100 is modern and highly developed overall, it relies upon the conventional 5.56mm chambering and uses NATO-standard magazines. So it made sense to match the ARX against the stalwart Colt M4 Carbine LE6920SOCOM, itself a semi-auto version of the M4A1 select-fire rifle.





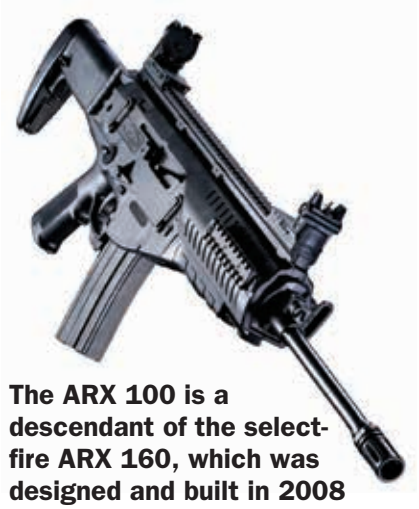
We matched the polymer newcomer against a civilian version of the Colt M4 5.56 to see how accuracy, reliability, and handling compared. In the end, we believe the Colt remains the better choice for most of our team.

The disadvantage the Beretta had to overcome was that most experienced rifle shooters handle the AR-15 as if it were second nature. To help dial out some of that bias, we assembled a group of both novice and

BERETTA ARX 100 JXR11B00 5.56X45 NATO (.223 REM.), $1522

GUN TESTS GRADE: B

The Beretta ARX 100 may be the Ferrari of Italian rifles. It is accurate, reliable, and more ambidextrous than any rifle we have tested. But it is pricey, and in the end the performance is not greater than the Colt AR-15. In fact, it was less accurate and came with a hard trigger.



The ARX 100 is a descendant of the select-fire ARX 160, which was designed and built in 2008 for the Italian military.

Action Type	Semi-Automatic, Short-Stroke Fixed Gas Piston
Overall Length (Min/Max)	33.5 to 35.75 in.
Weight Unloaded	7.0 lbs.
Overall Height (w/o Mag or Sights)	8.5 in.
Upper Receiver	Black Technopolymer, Ambi Ejection, Full-Length Picatinny Rail Top
Lower Receiver	Black Technopolymer, Integral Grip
Barrel	Black Cold-Hammer-Forged Steel 16 in., 1:7 RH Twist, 4 Grooves
Flash Hider	A2 Style
Muzzle Threads	1/2×28
Stock	4-Pos. Black Technopolymer, Collapsible & Side Folding
Length of Pull (Min/Max)	12.5 to 14.75 in.
Handguard	Integral Black Polymer, 3 Rails
Magazine	(1) Accepts STANAG and Many AR-Style
Magazine Capacity (as tested)	30
Rear Sight	Polymer, 6 Apertures; Adjustable Flip Up
Front Sight	Steel Post, W & E Adjustable
Sight Radius	15.0 in.
Sight Radius (Max)	15.0 in.
Trigger Pull Weight	9.75 lbs.
Safety	Ambidextrous, M4-style
Cartridge Case Deflector	No
Ejection Port Cover	No
Warranty	1 Year Limited
Telephone	(800) Beretta
Website	Beretta.com
Made In/By	USA/Beretta



Here, the ejection port is open on each side of the Beretta.



The rater's finger is on the bolt lock, and just above is the magazine release.



Most magazines worked fine in the Beretta, but check yours to make sure they do.



This is the lower magazine release, located in the bottom of the trigger guard.



The raters found the Beretta ergonomic and quickly acclimated to its handling. The Beretta ARX 100 represents research and development done correctly.

experienced raters for this project, one of whom has fired rifles, but never the AR-15 or the Beretta. With no prior AR-15 experience, we would see how quickly our novice could be brought up to speed on both rifles. Other shooters included a 20-year law-enforcement veteran, whose abstract on carbine training has been published on a federal level, and another rater who is a military captain recently returned from a fourteen-month deployment and a certified NRA instructor. We felt that this mix, along with other interested shooters, would help us pick the best battle rifle.

To test them, we used loads in different weights from several makers. We included Federal American Eagle 62-grain FMJ Green Tips (prior to the recent BATFE attempt at reclassifying them as armor piercing), Hornady 55-grain jacketed soft points, and Black Hills' 77-grain Open-Tip Match. We also fired the Black Hills 52-grain Match, Hornady 55-grain Zombie Max, and Federal's 55-grain JSP and Winchester's 55-grain FMJs. Here's what we found:

Beretta ARX 100 JXR11B00 5.56x45mm_NATO (223 Rem.), $1522

The Beretta features polymer upper and lower receivers in an ergonomic shell. Our first impression when handling the ARX was that it was well balanced and felt lighter than it actually is. The rifle handled particularly well during benchrest firing, which surprised us because of the rounded shape of its forend.

The rifle is ambidextrous. Human beings are bilaterally symmetrical, and the ARX 100 may make the same claim. The usual firearm is designed for a right-handed person. Then some type of modification is made to the rifle to accommodate the left-handed shooter, but such modifications aren't equal. This is an important consideration that civilians often overlook, but us, like soldiers, might find ourselves in a situation in which we need a rifle that may be

fired equally well off either shoulder. This rifle was set up for right-hand use, but the difference between right- and left-hand operation is minimal.

For instance, the bolt handle was set up for conventional cocking, and some of the raters felt it was easier to manipulate than the AR-15's cocking handle. Additionally, the cocking handle was easily removed and changed to the other side. Likewise, the ejection port is open on either side of the receiver, and there is no dust cover. To change the direction of cartridge ejection, the shooter pressed a bolt in the receiver to the left for left-hand ejection or to the right for right-hand ejection. This was easily accomplished with a bullet point. The safety was similar to the AR-15 and could be used on each side of the receiver. Our shooters thought the ARX safety handled well and was equal to the Colt's in ease of use. Likewise, the magazine release appeared on both sides of the rifle. Another auxiliary, or emergency, magazine release was located in the trigger guard. We pondered just how useful this might be, but the military rater felt that it would be useful for gloved-hand manipulation. This release required considerable effort to activate, and seemed more like the AK than the AR type.

The bolt release was in the trigger guard. We found it worked well enough. During rapid manipulation, none of the raters pressed the wrong control, despite all of the AR-15 shooters having their muscle memory geared to that platform. Rapid magazine changes were not as quick and sharp as when we shot the Colt, but with practice, we sped up. Despite concerns that the magazine release and the bolt release were too close together, there was never a problem.

When firing the rifle, one of the raters noted that his hands were in contact with the safety. Two out of three raters noted this. The safety didn't budge, but the feeling was odd enough for us to mention it. All the raters felt that the cocking handle was thin and uncomfortable to shoot after firing a few hundred rounds and racking the bolt to load the magazines. If the rifle had been run to the bolt lock, this wouldn't have been an issue. The military-type trigger was heavier than we expected to find, with it breaking at 9.5 pounds. It was smooth enough, but it did feel heavy.

The sights were an original design. The front sight was the usual post similar to the AR-15. The rear sight has a rotating wheel, which was moved left to right depending upon the range at which you will be firing, from 100 to 600 yards with apertures for 100, 200, 300, 400, and 600 yards. Notably, the 100- and 200-yard apertures appear to be the same diameter, but they are set at different places in the wheel. Our shooters said the sight worked well.

The rail was a one-piece top Picatinny onto which optics may easily be mounted. There were also side rails, one on each side of the receiver, and a short rail on the bottom of the receiver. You may hold the receiver in a way that your hands will not be abraded by the rails, a welcome change from the cheese-grater front on the Colt. The adjustable-position stock equalled the Colt's, and it also folded to the side, which gave it extra utility.

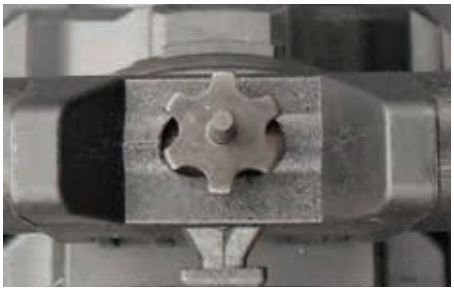
The rifle used a short-stroke piston design rather than the AR-15's gas-impingement system. The rifle was designed to be run dry, without lubricant. We did just that, and by the time the test period was done, there were more than 500 rounds fired in the rifle with only a wipe down and a few patches run down the barrel. We never had a failure to feed, chamber, fire, or eject. (We did clean the bore before testing.)

We fired it extensively at combat ranges of 25, 50, and 100 yards, primarily with Winchester 55-grain

The ARX barrel can be removed without disassembling the rest of the rifle. To do this, pull the bolt handle back until the handle aligns with the marks on the receiver, and pull it out and rotate the handle into the ejection port so that the bolt carrier assembly is locked in place. Then remove the barrel.









Above left: The rear sight was a rotating wheel, with apertures for 100, 200, 300, 400, and 600 yards. Above right: The front-sight post was similar to the AR-15. Left: The one-piece top Picatinny rail allowed easy mounting of optics, if you chose that. There were also side rails, one on each side of the receiver, and a short rail on the bottom of the receiver.

5.56 NATO/.223 REM. RANGE DATA

Hornady 55-gr. Z-Max Polymer Tip 83271	**Colt M4 Carbine LE6920SOCOM**	**Beretta ARX 100**
Average Velocity	2950 fps	2898 fps
Muzzle Energy	1062 ft.-lbs.	1025 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	1.75 in.	1.8 in.

Federal Green Tip 62-gr. XM855BK150	**Colt M4 Carbine LE6920SOCOM**	**Beretta ARX 100**
Average Velocity	2921 fps	2870 fps
Muzzle Energy	1174 ft.-lbs.	1133 fps
Average Group	2.0 in.	2.25 in.

Black Hills 77-gr. OTM	**Colt M4 Carbine LE6920SOCOM**	**Beretta ARX 100**
Average Velocity	2765 fps	2744 fps
Muzzle Energy	1306 ft.-lbs.	1287 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	1.5 in.	1.9 in.

To collect accuracy data, we used the rifles' supplied sights and fired three-shot groups from a solid bench rest. Distance: 50 yards. We recorded velocity with a Shooting Chrony Master Chronograph. The first skyscreen was set 15 feet from the muzzle. ***Ammo sources:*** *Black Hills 77-gr. Open-Tip Match, MidwayUSA.com $53.06/50; Federal 62-gr. Green Tip XM855BK150, CheaperThanDirt.com, $260.06/600; Hornady 55-gr. Z-Max Polymer Tip 83271, CheaperThanDirt.com, $15.39/20.* ***Note:*** *Price of the green tips was prior to the BATFE ban proposal and subsequent run.*



Each rifle was set up to use the 62-grain NATO load, which BATFE is proposing to ban as armor piercing. However, at the time of our test, these Federal 62-grain Green Tips were a standard target load from Federal. Now they are a lot more expensive than when these rifles were tested, if you can find any.



These are among the PMags used in the test. Note the stop on the top magazine. This overtravel stop prevented the mag's insertion into the Beretta magazine well.





We cleaned the rifles between stages of accuracy testing, and didn't see too much powder remnants for the number of shots we fired.

FMJ loads. The rifle came to the shoulder quickly, and the iron sights gave us good hits. At longer ranges, we noticed how heavy the trigger was, and as you can see from the range data, we just weren't that accurate with it.

The Beretta ARX 100 was designed to accept the NATO-standard STANAG magazine, which is a highly developed aluminum magazine. It is advertised as compatible with the AR-15 magazine, which isn't strictly true in our experience. We used Brownells magazines, PMags, and others left over from the AR-15 magazine test, including several PMag Generation 3 units. The Gen 3 magazine includes an impact and dust cover, marking matrix, slimline floor plate, Maglevel windows, and, importantly, an overtravel insertion stop. We found that this stop prevented the Gen 3 mags from fully entering the Beretta's magazine well. This is something to be aware of if you convert to the Beretta ARX.

Other features included the grip, which was molded into the lower receiver. While it fit most hands well, there is no changing it. There was an interesting adjustable gas block. "S" is the setting for standard loads. "N" is for Non Standard, which might be steel-cased loads or for use in directing more gas pressure when the rifle is very dirty.

Another advantage: The lower receiver may be removed, the barrel release pressed, and the barrel changed in about a minute. We stopped firing when the Beretta began smoking, but if the planned caliber conversions become available, the barrel-change feature is a real advantage in versatility.

When firing the Beretta, our least experienced rater felt that the rifle kicked less. The other raters did not feel the shuffling of the buffer, but the novice had to alert us to this. It probably isn't that recoil impulse is lessened, but rather he noticed the lack of a buffer spring. In any case, the ARX was a comfortable rifle to fire. In combat firing at 50 to 100 yards, the rifle performed well,

and our shooters could find little difference in the rifles in these fast-paced combat drills. However, our most experienced trainer noted that few shooters understand the value of properly extending the support arm to get close to the muzzle of the AR-15. This hold gives a real advantage in controlling the rifle and directing fire. With the Beretta, this forward hold isn't possible. In drills using this technique, the Colt outperformed the Beretta in the hands of our police and military trained raters. However, all our raters felt the polymer forend was more comfortable to hold than the quad rail on the Colt.

Because the rifle's disassembly is so different from what AR-15 shooters know and expect, we want to go into some detail on the process. Disassembling the ARX 100 for cleaning and maintenance requires several steps. No tools are required for disassembly or reassembly. To start, make sure the rifle is unloaded and on Safe, lock the bolt to the rear, and remove the barrel group. Further disassembly of the barrel group is not recommended.

Press the magazine release button on the right or left side of the receiver or the lower magazine release button on the bottom of the trigger guard and remove the magazine from the rifle. Then close the bolt carrier assembly by pulling the bolt handle back and releasing it or by depressing the left or right bolt catch levers. Depress the stock latch button and fold the stock to the right, exposing the retaining plate visible through the back of the receiver. Rotate the safety lever up past the safety position to the disassembly position; this will allow the retaining plate to be pressed in, releasing the lower receiver from the upper receiver.

Pull down on the lower receiver while holding the safety lever in the disassembly position and depressing the retaining plate through the back of the receiver. Remove the lower receiver from the upper receiver. Pull the bolt handle back until it aligns with the marks on the left and right sides of the receiver. Pulling out on

COLT M4 CARBINE LE6920SOCOM 5.56X45 NATO (.223 REM.), $1622

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

The Colt M4 looks and feels right and has a handguard that will hold attachments in a repeatable mounting position. It was reliable with every type of magazine and was fairly accurate.





The Colt's ambidextrous safety proved reliable in hundreds of manipulations. The Colt controls are well laid out. They invite rapid manipulation. The Colt receiver, we felt, is more compact, and this gives the Colt better balance in combat drills.



The Troy handguards left a mark. Perhaps gloves or covers should be used with the Colt. Of course, you can vary hand pressure on the rail, but the front C-clamp shooting hold requires firm contact. This was less of an issue in lightly braced barricade fire, but still worth noting.

Action Type	Semi-Automatic, Locking Bolt, Direct Gas Impingement
Overall Length (Min/Max)	32.0 in./35.5 in.
Weight Unloaded	6.9 lbs.
Overall Height (w/o mag or sights)	9.25 in.
Upper Receiver	Anodized Alum. Alloy, Matte Black, Flat Top, Picatinny Rail
Lower Receiver	Matte-Black Anodized Alum. Alloy, A2 Polymer Grip
Barrel	16.1 in., Matte-Black Parkerized Steel, Step Cut Chromed Bore, 1:7 RH Twist, 6 Grooves
Flash Hider	A2 Style
Muzzle Threads	1/2×28
Stock	4-Pos. Black Polymer Adj.
Length of Pull (Min/Max)	10.5 to 14.5 in.
Handguard	Troy Quad Rail
Magazine	1 AR-15/M4/M16 Pattern
Magazine Capacity (as tested)	30
Rear Sight	Flip Up, Adj.
Front Sight	Post, Elevation Adj.
Sight Radius	15.0 in.
Trigger Pull Weight	7.0 lbs., Single Stage
Safety	Ambidextrous
Cartridge Case Deflector	Yes
Ejection Port Cover	Yes
Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Telephone	(800) 962-COLT
Website	Colt.com
Made In/By	USA/Colt



Simple, robust and accurate, we liked the Colt's rear sight. Optics would help the gun's accuracy, but the front sight on the gas block interferes.

the bolt handle will keep the bolt from moving forward and allow the bolt handle to pivot around its pin. Rotate the bolt handle until it is aligned with the length of the bolt, and pull the bolt-carrier assembly out the back of the receiver. Depress the barrel release levers on both sides of the receiver and pull the barrel forward and out of the receiver. The barrel cannot be removed if the bolt is closed.

Remove the recoil spring from the bolt carrier by pressing forward on the recoil spring assembly, then rotate the recoil spring guide 90 degrees. Pull the recoil spring assembly out the back of the bolt carrier. Remove the bolt from the bolt carrier by rotating the bolt handle to the right or left side (do not push the bolt handle into the bolt) and pull the bolt back through the bolt carrier, rotating it to allow the bolt cam to follow the cam path and remove it from the carrier. Remove the firing pin from the bolt by pressing in on the firing pin and pulling the bolt cam pin out of the bolt. Then pull the firing pin and spring out the back of the bolt. This completes field stripping.

It's worth noting the barrel can be removed without disassembling the rest of the rifle. To remove the barrel without disassembling the rest of the rifle, pull the bolt handle back until the handle aligns with the marks on the receiver, and pull it out and rotate the handle into the ejection port so that the bolt carrier assembly is locked in place. Then remove the barrel.

Our Team Said: The ARX 100 had no malfunctions of any type, and in fact, the Beretta gets solid "A" grades on many other factors as well, including handling and its ambidextrous nature. However, to us, an overall "A" rating does not seem warranted. The ARX 100 costs twice as much as many excellent AR-15s, the accuracy was not as good as the Colt's, and the trigger was too heavy. With an AR-15, we could buy a good replacement trigger, drop it in, and improve both the trigger response and probably the accuracy. But in a cursory search, we couldn't locate a replacement trigger for the ARX 100, though Timney is reportedly working on one.

Colt M4 Carbine LE6920SOCOM
5.56x45 NATO (.223 Rem.), $1622

In most regards, this rifle is a civilian version of the military M4. The test rifle does not have a short barrel and a selector switch, of course, but otherwise it is similar. Fit, finish, and attention to detail are high with this rifle. The rifle featured an aluminum receiver and plastic furniture and a quad rail forend. At the butt was the proven four-position adjustable stock. The hollow grip fit most hands well, but if you don't like it, it is easily changed. All AR-15 magazines we had on hand locked and functioned properly.

There are features that set this Colt apart from other AR-15s. The rail forend allowed plenty of room for mounting optics, lights, or lasers. The rail was plainly marked so that the devices may be removed and replaced with a high degree of confidence in the zero, in the case of optics. The front sight was the standard AR-15 post. The sight came set at the lowest position, requiring adjustment to find the zero. The rear sight was an interesting option. The pop-up post featured a single aperture. The sight allowed the shooter to set the range for 200 to 600 yards. We were able to easily set the sights for 100 yards for the evaluation. They are calibrated for the 62-grain load, according to Colt, and we found this to be true, but we were able to get useful results with other bullet weights. The sights gave good results in both combat firing and absolute accuracy testing, as the range data table nearby shows.

The trigger was heavier than we like at 7 pounds. While lighter than the Beretta and with a smoother let off, it was still heavy and needed adjustment or replacement, in our opinion.

The Colt is not ambidextrous in the same sense as the Beretta,, but the LE6920 is still a useful firearm if you have to switch shoulders. The Colt featured an ambidextrous safety lever, and we found it worked well on both sides. To actuate the magazine release, the left-handed shooter must move the forward hand rearward, a move which should be practiced but which is by no means difficult.

The Colt was broken in with Winchester USA ball ammunition. In rapid fire and combat firing at moderate ranges and also at 100-yard targets, the Colt performed well for our shooters. In particular, the Colt exhibited brilliantly rapid magazine changes that were not possible with the Beretta — not that the Beretta is slow — the Colt carbine was simply very fast in replenishing the ammunition supply. During combat shooting, our testers said the Colt handled well, but for extended range sessions the shooters need to deploy gloves or rail covers. If you lightly hold the rifle and target shoot, this isn't an issue. But using the proper techniques and working the forend properly, the rifle must be grasped tightly, and the rail isn't that comfortable.

In our attempts at precision fire, taking every advantage from a solid benchrest position, we were able to achieve only fair results with the Colt. The Black Hills 77-grain MK III gave us a 1.5-inch 50-yard group average. Optics would certainly help improve accuracy, but this rifle is already pricey, so we don't want to assume you've got an unlimited budget.

The Colt is clearly accurate enough for any role in personal defense or 3 Gun competitions. The Colt will accept a myriad of aftermarket accessories, including trigger upgrades and stocks, while the Beretta has few available. Nor could items built for other platforms be easily adapted to ARX 100.

Our Team Said: Our novice felt that the Colt was the best handling for his needs, overall. And in the hands of the most experienced raters, the Colt outperformed the Beretta. The Colt is capable and proven. It is a good rifle at a premium price..

Written and photographed by R.K. Campbell, using evaluations from Gun Tests *team testers.* **GT**

Roessler Titan 6 Bolt Action

This Austrian switch-barrel rifle is light, innovative, and accurate. Its sole drawback is that it may be hard to find in the U.S.

It's not often we get a truly interesting rifle to test. Most are commonplace, and frankly carry little excitement for our test team. Once in a while a surprise comes along, and that's what happened recently. Houston Product Coordination Editor Kevin Winkle sent a rifle to Idaho that got our attention, and the more we looked into it, the more we liked it. This is the Roessler Titan 6, with interchangeable barrels in 300 Winchester Magnum and 270 Winchester (about $1980 for the rifle). The rifle came with no scope mounts and no iron sights, though both are available from the importer. There was, however, an excellent manual with the rifle printed on heavy stock that should last a long time. The receiver was a simple cylindrical type, and we guessed — correctly — that Remington Weaver-style bases would work on it. We used a Leupold 4X scope in Weaver rings for all our testing. We tested the gun with both barrels, using Remington and Winchester 180-grain loads in 300 Mag; and 130-, 140-, and 150-grain JSN Federal ammo in 270. Here's what we found.

Roessler Titan 6 Luxus (Luxury), 300 Winchester Magnum, $1980

Our search for information about these rifles led us to the Roessler Waffen (Röwa) website (www.Titan6.com), where we were confronted with the worst choice of colors imaginable. It was nearly impossible to read anything on the website, the printing being dark gray or dark green on a black background. Was it the intent of the makers to keep us in the dark about these interesting rifles? It sure seemed so.

Hidden on that webpage and elsewhere on the 'Net was information that the rifles are also available with stainless-steel barrels and polymer stocks, if desired. After long looking, we found the importer's website, and it helped us get a grip on this product. The lone importer in the U.S. is TR Imports (TRImports.com) near Dallas. That website has some legible information and a good short video explaining the Titan rifles. However, no pricing information was to be found there for the spare barrels/bolts/magazines. Changing from the magnum to standard caliber requires not only a different barrel, but also a different bolt and magazine. However, each of the bolts and magazines serves for many calibers, so you won't go broke buying separate ones for each different caliber. For example, the 270 magazine ($93) serves for four other calibers. We phoned them to find out the 270 barrel will set you back $407, and the spare bolt (without the interchangeable striker assembly) is $368.

It's immediately obvious to us that if you need two





Top: Senior Technical Editor Ray Ordorica was taken with the Titan. It performed well, was light, cleverly designed, had a superb trigger, and for what it is, we thought the price was within reason. Middle: In the late afternoon sun the fine Italian walnut shows its stuff, which is helped by its easy-to-fix oil finish. The recoil pad was outstanding, though slim. The trigger was a dream. Below, the rifle shows off its Bavarian styling, including a rosewood-tipped Schnabel forend.



calibers, the way to save money is to get them with the same head size. For instance, a 243 and a 30-06. That lets you use the same bolt for both, with only a different magazine needed. Having a standard caliber and a magnum caliber is an expensive way to go. But if you have two calibers on the same rifle, why not have more? Adding a 338 Win. Mag. to our test rifle combo would cost only $407. And there are 31 calibers available, so the choice is yours.

Roessler tells us it is small, independent, and based in Kufstein, Austria. The company began in 1996 with the intent of building top-notch hunting rifles that incorporate innovation and a classic, hand-worked look. As noted, the company offers no fewer than 31 different calibers, from 222 to 375 Ruger. Half a dozen of the smaller ones utilize the Titan T3 action, with three bolt lugs. The remainder are in the T6 setup with its six-lug bolt. Not to confuse the issue too much, but Roessler also offers a 16-lug straight-pull rifle in a multitude of calibers. We will not discuss that rifle further here.

Both the Titan 3 and Titan 6 have a 60-degree bolt lift. Some of the barrels are made by Wilson Arms in the U.S. Others, probably the metric calibers, are made by Heym in Germany. The rifle has an aluminum receiver, available, like the barrels, in two finishes, black or silvery (stainless). The bolt locks into the back of the barrel, not into the receiver. This results in a light rifle with an exceptionally smooth bolt. Further, it permits for easy barrel changing. More on that later.

The tricks for removing and reinserting the bolt are the nicest we've seen in many long years. To get it out, open the bolt, press the trigger and pull the bolt smartly out the back. To get it back in — which stymied us until we read the manual — insert it with the bolt knob vertical, press the trigger, and shove the bolt halfway home. Then simply twist it to the right until it stops. That's it. The lock time is incredibly fast. Tests (not ours) have shown it to

ROESSLER TITAN 6 LUXUS 300 WIN MAG. $1980

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

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



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



This beautiful unit was one of the finest triggers we've seen on any rifle. Two pounds clean.



We found the checkering to be excellent and functional. The action is anodized aluminum. The steel barrel contains the locking lugs, so the lugs don't touch the action. This rifle had a smooth bolt. The tang safety was great, too. The light 4X Leupold in low Weaver bases made for a great complement to the light rifle.



Two magazines are necessary to accommodate both the magnum cases and the standard ones. The magnum size holds two cartridges, the standard, three. An extended magazine, $116, holds five standard rounds or four magnum cartridges. The smart way to economize when purchasing extra barrel sets is to choose similarly-sized rounds.



The magazine receptacle and trigger guard are one piece, and made of polymer. Those two ears on the sides of the box release the magazine. As you can see, woodfitting was topnotch.

be 1.7 milliseconds, compared with the fast Remington 700 rifles at 2.6 milliseconds.

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

The wood has an oiled finish, which makes it easy to repair nicks and dings that are relatively permanent in epoxy-finished stocks. There were sling-attachment points under the forearm and butt. The four panels of checkering were of excellent quality. Fit and finish were excellent everywhere we looked. The integral trigger guard and magazine housing is made of polymer. Inside the rifle the recoil is taken by a polymer box that captures the barrel-changing clamp at the front, and by an aluminum insert at the back that holds the rearmost of the two action screws. These are Allen headed, metric size, and the same-size wrench is used to remove the action from the stock and to undo the clamp screws to swap barrels. We were somewhat surprised at the use of polymer for the recoil box, but found that not only does it work to perfection, the rifle was extremely accurate in both calibers.

With an all-up weight of 7.8 pounds with our 4X Leupold attached, we expected the rifle to kick us severely. That did not happen, not from the bench nor while standing. Yes, the barrel rose in recoil significantly when we were standing and shooting the 300 Win. Mag. loads, but the stock design, combined with the good recoil pad, caused us no discomfort. Part of that might have been from the somewhat upright head position this rifle requires, another part of the excellent stock design.

The magazine comes out by squeezing two opposing serrated latches. A spring-loaded plunger shoves the mag free of the rifle, easing its removal. The magnum magazine held only two cartridges, so the rifle is a 2+1 when set up as a magnum. If that's not enough, extended magazines are available. The standard-caliber magazine holds



Extraction is by the sliding hook to the left. Ejection is by a sprung plunger inside the bolt recess, underneath the lug at about 2 o'clock. The entire head of the cartridge is surrounded by steel, and there are escape ports for gas if a primer ruptures.



With a twist of the end, the bolt comes apart to these three parts. The firing pin drops in loose, and the striker assembly, which is interchangeable between standard and magnum bolts, does not need to come further apart. The striker shows a red dot when cocked.



One potential trouble spot is the firing pin, which is small and has no significant radius at its base. We suspect it will break, especially if you dry fire your rifle. However, it's a simple part and can be easily replaced. Carry a spare.





Top: The back of the action has an aluminum pillar through which the rear action bolt runs. The recess behind it is for the tang safety. Bottom: This is the recess for the action clamping box, which takes the recoil from the rifle in conjunction with the aluminum pillar at the back.





Basically, the Titan's action is a thin circle of aluminum with a slot at the bottom, right. The slot is clamped by two screws, which provide all the support needed. The box through which the two screws go forms the recoil lug, held in place by a plastic box within the stock. Above: The two screws pinch the aluminum action together to secure the barrel in place. The bolt locks into the barrel, not the action.



The lower barrel shows the slight relief that permits the barrel to slide into the front of the action. Only modest pressure is needed to hold the system together. Accuracy was excellent during our tests.

RANGE DATA

Remington 300 Win. Mag. 180-gr. Core-Lokt PSP	**Titan 6 Luxus**
Average Velocity	2935 fps
Muzzle Energy	3440 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	1.9 in.

Winchester 300 Win. Mag. 180-gr. Power Point SP	**Titan 6 Luxus**
Average Velocity	2985 fps
Muzzle Energy	3558 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	1.2 in.

Federal Premium 270 Win 130-gr. BTSP	**Titan 6 Luxus**
Average Velocity	3025 fps
Muzzle Energy	2639 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	1.5 in.

Federal Premium 270 Win. 140-gr. Trophy Bonded	**Titan 6 Luxus**
Average Velocity	2800 fps
Muzzle Energy	2435 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	1.0 in.

Federal Classic 270 Win. 150-gr. SP RN	**Titan 6 Luxus**
Average Velocity	2785 fps
Muzzle Energy	2581 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	1.2 in.

Velocity was recorded at 10 feet using an Oehler 35P chronograph with proof channel. We used a machine rest to fire three-shot groups at a distance of 100 yards.

three rounds. Slipping a round up the spout is easy, unless the loaded magazine is fully in place. Then the rifle prefers to feed from the box.

The barrel length for the 300 Win. Mag. was a full 26 inches, so it got the maximum out of the loads. The 270 had a 22-inch length. Changing barrels was extremely easy. We used our own Harbor Freight 4.5mm wrench with T handle (the accompanying Allen wrench got lost in shipping). We took out the two action screws, first removing their small rubber caps, a nice touch that keeps the wrench holes clean.

The action came out easily. The same wrench loosened two clamping screws on the receiver front, and then the barrel pulled out easily. We first lightly oiled the 270 barrel and wiped off all the excess oil and slipped it into the receiver. Before tightening those two screws, we put the bolt in place and locked it down. We then tightened the two locking screws, checking our guesswork with a torque wrench. The suggested torque is 62 inch-pounds, which translates to a good squeeze on the T handle. We were right on the money (having calibrated fingers, of course). This was all spelled out in the excellent manual. We then put the rifle back into the stock, and with the same torque snugged down the two action screws.

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

On the range, the rifle performed flawlessly. Feeding was as slick as we've experienced in any rifle. Ejection was by a plunger, and worked just fine. The extractor was reminiscent of the post-'64 Winchesters, a spring-loaded sliding catch. The movement of the bolt in its raceway was also glass-smooth. The trigger was absolutely a wonder. It's the best we've experienced since the Savage AccuTrigger, light, clean, crisp, zero overtravel. Just think of firing it and the rifle goes Bang! It is vital to keep your fingers off the trigger until you are ready to fire because let off is only 2 pounds.

The safety was also a joy, being a tang type that we found natural to operate. Pull it all the way back, and it locks the bolt. In the middle it unlocks the bolt, and all the way forward lets you fire the rifle. Note that you cannot remove the bolt from the rifle unless the safety is fully off, because it's necessary to be able to press the trigger enough to release the mechanism.

There is one thing we don't like about this rifle. The bolt takedown is simplicity itself, and we loved that. Twist the rear slightly to the right and the innards come out. This reveals the firing pin, which we don't like even a little. It's tiny, sticking out from its square base with no stress relief. We strongly suspect it'll break with not much dry firing. To reassemble the bolt, you must drop that pin into the bolt and rattle it around until it slips into place. Then the rest of the mechanism goes back in easily and snaps back into place with a twist. That, too, is great. But we think the tiny firing pin is the Achilles heel of this set up.

The only other problem we can see with this rifle, if you want one, is finding one. To give an idea of the chance of your finding a Titan outside the U.S., there is one distributor in Argentina, two in southern Africa, one in Australia, one in Iceland, one in New Caledonia (can you find that on the map?), a few other distributors here and there, and many dozens throughout Europe.

Our Team Said: We think it's well worth the trouble of looking for the Roessler Titan 6 rifle. We found the Titan offers excellent performance and innovation in an attractive package, plus the option of changing calibers with the twist of a wrench. While it's not inexpensive, it's a great rifle, and we were mightily impressed with it.

Written by Ray Ordorica, using evaluations from Gun Tests *team testers.* **GT**

Beretta Unveils APX Striker Gun

Para USA is moving, but will it survive? Streamlight offers green laser/light combo; Armalite introduces two 3 Gun models.

Beretta's APX, a new striker-fired full-size pistol in 9x19mm, 9x21mm IMI and 40 Smith & Wesson cartridges, debuted at the 2015 International Defence Exhibition & Conference IDEX expo in Abu Dhabi Feb. 22.

"IDEX is one of the first venues where defense contractors present their wares to worldwide military customers and Beretta felt this was the ideal environment to present the international offering of its APX pistol," said Carlo Ferlito, general manager of Beretta and Beretta Defense Technologies (BDT) vice president.

Beretta intends to market a variant for the commercial market later this year. The new Beretta APX has an ergonomically-molded reinforced polymer frame fitted with a built-in MIL-STD-1913 Picatinny rail, interchangable backstraps and grip panels, and a modified Browning locking system. The APX is 7.56 inches long with a 4.25-inch barrel.

The trigger can be considered a light double action, with a 6-pound break, 0.2 inch of travel, and a 0.12-inch reset. The rear portion of the striker slightly protrudes from a round slot on the back of the slide as a loaded-chamber indicator.

The slide is machined from stainless steel and has a nitride coating that reduces glare, scratches, and corrosion. Other features include wide front and rear slide serrations, three-dot sights dovetailed into the slide, and no manual safety save for a Glock-style trigger safety.



Ferlito said, "Beretta waited to enter the striker-fired market until we had a pistol we knew would meet the needs of the operator. The APX has been more than three years in development. We tested it extensively with professional end users and incorporated that feedback at every opportunity. The result is a pistol platform that delivers superior performance in durability, reliability, accuracy and ergonomics."

A slot on the frame allows the use of a tool to decock it before it can be field-stripped by operating a lever found on the left side of the frame.

An optional manual safety system will be available upon request, consisting of a frame-mounted two-position switch. A reversible magazine-release catch and a factory ambidextrous slide stop/hold open release lever help make the pistol suitable for left- or right-handed shooters.

Supplied black double-stack metal magazines have polymer bottom pads and offer 17-round capacities in 9x19mm NATO and 15-round capacities in 9x21mm IMI (9 Italian) and 40 Smith & Wesson.

Para to Move to Alabama; Will Name Disappear?

In a statement on Feb. 9, Remington Outdoor Company (ROC) announced that Para USA is scheduled to move to ROC's new Huntsville, Alabama facility next month — and in the statement, the company hinted that the Para name may soon disappear as well.

According to the company statement, "Para's products have a strong following due to their key technical and performance features, which are different than many 1911s, including Remington's own R1 line. ROC intends to keep these features and benefits that our customers have come to trust, while transferring Para's operations to Huntsville and rebranding Para to Remington. We have learned from our mistakes, listened to our customers, and have a clear plan to smoothly integrate Para. This includes keeping popular Para products, characteristics, and names such as the 'Warthog,' while improving quality with state-of-the art machining and engineering in Huntsville, AL….

"Further, ROC will recognize and continue to support Para's Lifetime Warranty promise on all Para handguns."

In 2011 Remington re-entered the handgun market with the R1 1911, an updated version of the 1911 Remington made for the US government in World War I.

In 2012, ROC acquired Para USA, a company that specialized in the production of competition, high capacity, and double action 1911-style pistols. After Remington's acquisition, according to the company, Para, which had been experiencing quality control issues, saw a steep decline in warranty claims. Para USA, LLC is currently located in Pineville, NC.

In 2014, ROC announced its new firearms center in Huntsville.

Streamlight Introduces TLR-2 HL G With Green Laser

Streamlight has introduced the $580 TLR-2 HL G, a high-lumen (HL) gun-mounted tactical light with a green aiming laser. The new TLR-2



HL G puts out 720 lumens of light in a wide beam pattern. The integrated green laser, which appears brighter to the human eye in daylight than lasers of other colors, improves aiming accuracy with either a solid beam or a strobe function.

The light mounts on most standard rail guns using Streamlight's one-handed, snap-on-and-tighten interface. It also can be stored on a handgun. In addition to its lumen output, the TLR-2 HL G delivers 14,000-candela peak beam intensity and a shock-proof C4 LED. Its 510-530-nm green laser is integrated in the light's reflector. The TLR-2 HL G weighs 4.78 ounces and measures 3.39 inches in length.

Armalite Rolls Out 3-Gun Rifles

Armalite is launching more than 17 SKUs in 2015, with the first guns coming out of the factory being items in the Armalite 3-Gun Series. Available in both 5.56x45mm (M-15, $1,599) and 7.62x51mm (AR-10, $2,099), the Armalite 3-Gun Series rifles feature stainless-steel barrels in both 13.5- and 18-inch lengths. The 13.5-inch models have a pinned/welded muzzle brake to make the external barrel length 16 inches. Armalite's new muzzle brake and adjustable gas block allow each rifle to be individually tuned. A free-floating handguard, Raptor ambidextrous charging handle, Luth-AR MBA-1 adjustable buttstock and factory installed 3-pound Timney trigger round out the packages.



Faxon Firearms Adds 7.62x39 Kit to ARAK-21 Platform

Cincinnati, Ohio–based Faxon Firearms has added the 7.62x39 Russian chambering to its offerings for the ARAK-21. Faxon's ARAK platform combines elements of the AR and AK platforms.

Bob Faxon, president and founder of Faxon Firearms, said, "With the addition of the 7.62x39, we are expanding the capabilities for each user of the ARAK-21, adding a larger-caliber round that's less expensive for most shooters to buy."

MSRP for the ARAK-21 7.62x39 Kit is $499. MSRP for single-barrel upper receivers is $1199 and multiple-caliber kits that include 7.62x39 will add $99 for the bolt and firing pin. 7.62x39-equipped ARAKs and kits started shipping in late February.



The 7.62x39 caliber will be available in standard ARAK-21 upper receivers, complete XRS rifles, and as a stand-alone kit for existing ARAK-21s. Kits will be available in 12.5- and 16-inch medium-profile barrels.

This system makes the ARAK-21 platform one of the most versatile platforms on the market, allowing the user to have have three uppers on one lower (5.56mm NATO, 300 Blackout, and 7.62x39).

Current ARAK-21 users/owners can simply purchase the 7.62x39 kit as an addition to their current rifle upper. The 7.62x39 caliber kit comes with an interchangeable bolt, firing pin and barrel.

SilencerCo Announces Gun Trust Service

Utah-based firearm-suppressor manufacturer SilencerCo announced



the debut of its EasyTrust service, which creates a legally-valid gun trust for $129.99.

According to the company, the online service removes several steps in the process of purchasing silencers and other items regulated by the National Firearms Act (NFA), while also protecting the rights of individuals, families and groups to own, transfer and possess NFA-regulated firearms.

SilencerCo says the EasyTrust has been prepared by qualified legal counsel and is valid in all 50 states. Among the benefits of a gun trust is the elimination of certain NFA item pre-purchase requirements, including, for now, written approval from a local chief law enforcement officer and submission of buyer photographs and fingerprints.

"Since we entered the sound suppression business a few years ago, we have constantly looked for ways to provide products and services that make more people aware you can buy silencers, and that make the purchasing process easier," said SilencerCo CEO Joshua Waldron.

A properly-prepared gun trust has significant advantages for gun owners. It enables the use of NFA-regulated firearms among family members and trust members, protects against potential future regulatory restrictions, and provides for the transition of ownership upon death.

Four-Barrel Tip-up Handgun Coming Soon

Signal 9 Defense based in Gallatin, Tennessee showed one of the more unusual firearms at the SHOT Show: the 4-barrel Reliant handgun. The Reliant is pitched as a personal defense or backup firearm that has

— *continued from page 31*

no external action like a revolver or a pistol. It functions more like a break-open shotgun.

The four-shot, four-barrel break-action handgun employs interchangeable barrels with chamberings in 32 ACP (requires moon clip), 32 HR Mag, 32 Long, 32 Short, 380 ACP (requires moon clip) 38 Spl, 38 +P, 38 S&W, 38 Long, and 38 Short.

The stainless-steel barrels are mated to a hard-coat anodized aluminum frame. The company is pitching the Reliant's patent-pending all-internal action as having no jams, and the action cannot be neutralized by an assailant grasping the gun.

A four-shot speedloader fits in the grip. The grip automatically activates an optional red or green laser. Signal 9 Defense has partnered with LaserMax, so the handgun comes prewired so users can decide at a later date to drop in the laser, if desired.



The barrels are 2.63 inches long, the handgun stands 4.25 tall without speed loader, and is 5.25 inches long. It weighs about 16 ounces.

An entire pistol (all calibers) has an MSRP of $499. An additional barrel (all calibers, includes speed loader) is $175. The optional speed loader (all calibers) is $25. The optional red laser kit is $149, and the optional green laser kit is $299.

Compiled by Gun Tests *staff.* **GT**

COMING UP IN GUN TESTS

- More Commanders: We take a look at the Ruger SR1911CMD-A 6711, the company's version of the Lightweight Commander 45.
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- Lightweight 45 ACP Revolvers: The S&W Model 325PD and the S&W Performance Center Model 625-10 both feature scandium alloy N-frames, alloy barrel shrouds, steel barrels and titanium cylinders.
- 308 Battle Rifle Shoot Out: Two full-size 30-caliber battle rifles square off. The PTR 91 GI Model and the Century International C 91.
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