GUN TESTS®

THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

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DEFENSE PUMPGUNS

Our three test guns were based on the proven Remington 870 pattern: the Advantage Tactical upgrade, an Express Tactical unit, and an IAC Hawk 982. One is a Best Buy.
— Page 6



BIG-BORE SNUBNOSES

Tested: The Charter Arms Pitbull 45 ACP, the Taurus Public Defender Polymer in .410/45 Long Colt, and the Charter Arms Classic Bulldog in 44 Special. Outcome: All were flawed, but one not so much. **— Page 12**



1911 MAGAZINES RATED

We tested products from 16 makers you will likely recognize, including Brownells, Kimber, Wilson Combat, Ed Brown, Remington, Colt, ProMag, Chip McCormick, and others. One not mentioned here came up a surprise Best Buy. **— Page 20**

DOWNRANGE: 2 ● FIRING LINE: 3 ● BIG 9MM PISTOLS: 25 ● SHORT SHOTS: 32 ● COMING UP: 32

DOWNRANGE

MEDDLING BY BATF HALTED



Todd Woodard

During the summer, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) released an Explosives Industry Newsletter that changed the agency's treatment of nitrocellulose, the primary component in smokeless powders used in modern ammunition. This change had the potential to seriously disrupt ammunition supply in the United States because it changed a long-standing ATF policy that exempted properly "wetted" nitrocellulose from treatment as an explosive under federal law.

Ammunition makers raised concerns to ATF, and thankfully, any change in ATF's treatment of nitrocellulose is now officially delayed. In an addendum to the earlier newsletter, ATF announced that it "will conduct further industry outreach concerning wetted Nitrocellulose. In the interim, previously authorized industry practices concerning wetted Nitrocellulose will not be affected."

While the addendum doesn't indicate that ATF has permanently abandoned this change to nitrocellulose regulation, smokeless powder manufacturers will be permitted to continue normal operation, at least for the time being. So, yes, ammunition availability will likely stay the same, but just be aware that this regulatory effort was going on, and how it could have affected retail supplies.

A federal ban on the sale of guns to medical marijuana card holders does not violate the Second Amendment, a federal appeals court has ruled. The decision by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals applies to the nine Western states that fall under the court's jurisdiction, including California, Washington and Oregon.

Background: S. Rowan Wilson is a Nevada woman who said she tried to buy a firearm for self-defense in 2011 after obtaining a medical marijuana card. The gun store refused, citing the federal rule banning the sale of firearms to illegal drug users. It is still illegal to buy marijuana under federal law, even though some states have legalized consumption of the plant.

Wilson said she was not a marijuana user, but obtained the card in part as an expression of support for marijuana legalization.

In its 3-0 decision, the 9th Circuit said it was reasonable for federal regulators to assume a medical marijuana card holder was more likely to use the drug.

By the time you read this, we'll likely know if Missouri lawmakers in Jefferson City have voted to override Governor Jay Nixon's veto of Senate Bill 656. The override vote on SB 656 was scheduled for September 14, and here's hoping the Missouri General Assembly will cancel Nixon's veto — making the Show Me State yet another Constitutional Carry state. SB 656 would allow anyone legally eligible to possess a firearm to carry a firearm for self-defense without a permit. **GT**

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Hunter Quacks Over A300 Grade

We can only hope to still be lugging dekes when we're 85, like Keith, who took exception to our review of the Beretta last month. Also, James wonders if we'll be looking at the R51 again.



Re "Waterfowling Shotguns: We Like The Winchester Super X3 Best," September 2016

After reading your comparison of the camouflage waterfowl shotguns, I was a little disappointed in the rating of C for the A300 Outlander. I have one in walnut; otherwise, it is the exact same as the waterfowl version. I took it out last winter and had no problem getting my limit of ducks. This spring I shot about 75 rounds of ⅞-ounce loads through it with no problems at all. The gun worked perfectly. My rating for this gun is a B. It has nice walnut, but I did a little work on the finish to make it look a little bit better. I'm 85 years old and have owned many shotguns to know that this is a good gun. I am still shooting and hunting ducks today. The recoil of this gun does not bother me. The reason I bought the gun is because it is lightweight. Keep up the good work. **— Keith**

We wish you more great luck this coming season. — Todd Woodard

Re Remington R51

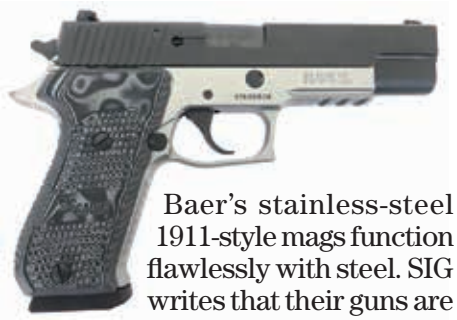
What's the latest word on the Remington R51? Are you going to re-test the new version of the pistol? **— James**



Senior Product Coordinator Kevin Winkle said, "I have contacted Remington and they are shipping my replacement pistol. I should have it this week." So, yes, we'll get it in the works pronto. — tw

Re "Problem With SIG P220 and Steel Casings

Maybe not related to a very recent issue, but I object to the fact that the stainless-steel P220 45 ACP mags supplied by SIG (with a new CPO 220) do not load steel-cased ammo. My old blue-steel 220 mags load and feed steel without fault. Les Baer's stainless-steel 1911-style mags function flawlessly with steel. SIG writes that their guns are not intended to function with steel, but there is no warning of this anywhere in its literature. I shoot steel-cased ammo because it costs less, and once worked, it is just as good as brass. SIG ought to wake up and correct this. **— Jim**



We haven't seen this problem in our tests, so we're not going to ding

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.

SIG Sauer for it. Several firearms manufacturers advise against the use of certain ammunition types, and we all know some guns will eat anything, and some won't. Also, it may not be the material — the metal — but instead the dimensions, especially of the rim cut-out. The solution is to buy older versions of P220 mags that fit and function in your gun, because some of the older mags will feed steel-cased ammunition better. Also, some aftermarket mags will do better with certain pistol and ammunition pairings. If you want to see our coverage of the P220 models, check these issues: May 2001, March 2004, February 2005, August 2007, January 2009, and May 2016 (10mm). — tw

Re "5.56mm Pistols from Kel-Tec, Spike's Tactical, and CMMG," September 2016

I just finished your review of the "wicked" looking Spike's Tactical The Jack pistol. If you had to use this gun to defend yourself, and a prosecutor was deciding whether to prosecute you, would you want him viewing a gun which "has a skull face machined into the lower receiver." Really? How about your earlier review of a 45 automatic with grips emblazoned with a skull? I once saw a car wreck where one car had flames painted on the side. When it came to determining who was at fault, would you want to be the driver of a car so decorated? Or, as actually happened in a kidnapping case, the suspects had a car with the bumper sticker, "I am the man your father warned you about." And what about that sign on your property that says "Trespassers will be shot. Survivors will be shot again." Think about the message you are sending and the effect it might have on your freedom. **— Donald**

Hey Donald: Though the rules vary somewhat state to state, in the first scenario you describe, I've heard attorneys from Texas Law Shield (TexasLawShield.com) say repeatedly that how force or



deadly force is applied — the gun, the ammo, the trigger job, the cosmetics — doesn't matter nearly as much as the circumstances. In a home-defense situation, which is the context for that review, the gun's cosmetics never come into play because of state statutes that protect the lawful use of force in defense of yourself and others in the home. I won't say that's true everywhere because it's not, but most states line up with similar Stand Your Ground and Castle Doctrines. As always, you must know how your local laws work. — tw

Re "Three Trail Companions We Like," May 2015

In the May and July 2015 issues of Gun Tests *magazine, you wrote about the Mora of Sweden Moraknif 11746 Robust Companion MG Heavy Duty Carbon-Steel Knife knife and sheaths for it. I saved the two articles and finally purchased one of the knives from Amazon, and am now looking to buy a leather sheath. I just sent an*



e-mail to lastditchleatherworks@aol.com and it was returned as failed permanently. Can you help me reach Mr. Scow about making a leather knife sheath for me? Please advise. — Bill

Regrettably, that's the only contact information for Mr. Scow we ever had. Here's hoping that six degrees of separation finds Mr. Scow in good health and able to respond. — tw

Re "9mm Subcompact Shoot-out: Nano, LC9s, and the XD-S 3.3," February 2015

Long-time subscriber here. I got one of the first Ruger LCPs out there, and it was rugged and reliable. But I didn't like the trigger, as it was way too long, and I'd have to almost change my grip to fire it. I bought the improved LCP with the red trigger and sold the other one. I love the new one. After much research, I bought a Ruger LC9s, after reading that the



first ones out had problems. I took my new gun to the range, and after about 60 rounds, it quit. The action wouldn't recock. Initially, I didn't know whether to be angry or proud that I'd broken a Ruger. I've had a Ruger 10/22 since 1968, and Ruger handguns all my life and was unable to break them.

Anyway, I contacted Ruger, and then sent the gun to them in Prescott. Absolutely wonderful people that I talked to. I got the LC9s back about three weeks later, and off to the range I went. I fired factory ball ammo and assorted hollow points through it

with no problem, more than 100 rounds. It's what I'm carrying right now. **— Mark**



Re "380 ACP Shoot Out: Ruger LCP Takes On Remington, Rock Island," August 2016

As before, allow me to preface my comments with compliments on your content, format, and, most important, your absolute honesty. I am 71 years old, formerly a police officer (when domestic calls involved dinosaurs) as well as 15 years of military service in the Navy, Army, and Marine Corps.

As such, I have seen and done much, but I am still amazed at how many people praise "pocket pistols" over a more substantial weapon. I have carried for about 60 years (yes, I carried when I was 11) and have used virtually every caliber. As I got older, I have gone from the 45 ACP to a Ruger SR9C in, of course, 9mm for a multitude of age-related reasons, but still consider being armed a responsibility to my family. Using the extended magazine, I am comfortable having that 16 rounds plus two spares in a custom Rick Harvey mag carrier (with the bonus of a flashlight between the mags). At 6'5" and 185 pounds, this is easy to carry (24/7/365) and conceal. During the several events whereupon it was necessary to draw my weapon (in the past four years), I never felt undergunned, but I would have felt that with just the Ruger LCP in my ankle holster. People need to face reality; real life usually dictates you need more than the rounds available in a pocket pistol. And yes, I am old and grumpy. **— Steven**

It's hard to argue with anything you said, and your words carry the weight of experience. Still, every concealed carrier has to make the gun/life balance for himself or herself. — tw

Likes His New Hi-Point

I know that many Gun Tests readers have questioned your previous recommendations of various Hi-Point products over the years, but I recently purchased a Hi-Point JHP 45 ACP, and I could not be more pleased. As per the attached pictures, shooting off-hand, standing, and from 35 feet, using inexpensive regular ammo, I aimed for the center of the white square; I then used the bullet hole as my aim point for the next three shots. I am not an expert marksman. I have a Ruger Blackhawk 357 Magnum and two blackpowder revolvers; this was my first 45 pistol, and for under $200, I am very pleased. I did buy and install the carbon-fiber grips straight from Hi-Point's website. Please share these results with your other readers. **— Calvin**



Happy to do that, Calvin. — tw



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We welcome mail from our readers. To send us comments or questions about previous articles in the magazine, email us at: **GunTestsEditor@icloud.com.** *If you'll include the month and year of the article you're writing about, it's a big help. Also, please include your name, address, and phone number. We won't publish your personal information other than your name, but we may need to contact you about material in your letter.* **GT**

Home-Defense Shotguns: We Compare Three Pump Actions

All based on the proven Remington 870 pattern, we tested an Advantage Tactical upgrade, an Express Tactical unit, and an IAC Hawk 982. All will do the job, but the Hawk is a Best Buy.

The shotgun is seen by many as the best choice for personal defense and especially home defense. The most powerful portable shoulder-fired weapon used for self preservation, the 12-gauge shotgun offers a multiple-projectile load that has been proven effective in close-quarters defense. With slug loads, it is even suitable for defense against large, dangerous animals. In rural defense, there are plenty of deadly predators in the country, feral dogs, mountain lions, and other dangerous animals that only an aggressive counterattack will stop. But without proper firearm and load selection, as well as training, the shotgun will be underutilized. More than one citizen has defended himself with the shotgun, and common sense tells us that we should have one in the home.



Our test set of defensive shotguns included, from top, the Remington Express Tactical 12-Gauge Pump Action, $346; the Chinese-made IAC Hawk 982 12-Gauge Pump Action, $233; and the Remington 870 Police Shotgun Modified with Adaptive Tactical Forend and M4 Type Stock, $420. The basic designs were all 870-based, so many of the handling and controls cues were the same.

In this test, the shotguns we chose are among the best in their price range. The choices range from a pedestrian bead-sighted model to a tactical model with an AR-15 type stock. While self-loaders rule the day at 3 Gun competitions and are very reliable, a dirty pump will work when a dirty automatic will not. We have seen self-loaders malfunction during our test programs, and we know the pump-action shotgun is relatively easy to master, as long as you get quality training so you're confident in your skills and sure in your manipulation.



Fun isn't the word for firing strings of full-power buckshot.



With this in mind, we chose three likely shotguns for home defense. The top end of the budget was $450, but we would prefer to spend less to get a good pump-action gun, if we could. We fired them with practice loads, home defense loads, good loads suitable for pest and predators, and slugs suitable for defense against large animals. We used five different loads for testing these shotguns. We tried to find the most economical offerings in bulk. This included the Fiocchi 12HV75 birdshot ($97 for 250 shotshells from CheaperThanDirt.com) Fiocchi 1-ounce Aero slugs ($8.10/10 from VenturaMunitions.com), Hornady 86240 Critical Defense 00 buckshot loads

Left: The IAC Hawk 982 is the Best Buy of this shoot-out, according to our testers. The Ghost Ring rear sight gives a trained shooter the ability to deliver fast hits and is well protected by metal wings. The front sight is well suited to precision shooting with slugs.

($11.08/10 from CheaperThanDirt.com), Hornady's Varmint Express, a load using 24 pellets at 1350 fps ($16/10 from Gandermountain.com), and Winchester 3-inch 12-gauge 00 buckshot loads (No. XB12300VB, $17/15 from CheaperThanDirt.com) This selection covered the likely uses for personal defense, predators, and even large animals. Each shotgun was fired with 50 birdshot shells, 10 of each of the buckshot loads, and 10 Fiocchi slugs, for a total of at least 90 shells per gun. This is punishing work and was not accomplished in a single range session. We fired mainly the light-kicking birdshot to learn how to function the guns quickly and determine their smoothness and ergonomics.

Here are the results.

Remington 870 Police Shotgun Modified with Adaptive Tactical Forend and M4-Type Stock, $420

We arrived at the package price for this gun by taking a reasonable acquisition cost for an average used 870 Police model shotgun ($300) and adding to it the cost of the Adaptive Tactical Forend and M4-type stock, $120. One of our testers upgraded the Riot gun with the Adaptive Tactical (AdaptiveTactical.com) stock and forend set. The EX Performance Adjustable Stock with pistol grip features an easy-to-reach rapid-adjust lever for custom length of pull, and includes an integrated QD swivel attachment and molded in non-rust standard sling swivel attachment. A non-slip vented rubber recoil pad, oversized extra strength adjustment pin, and sleek industrial design complete the buttstock's specifications.

The EX Performance Forend features a 2-inch Picatinny rail concealed under the nose cap. Uncovered, it's ideal for attaching tactical accessories like lasers or lights. The EX Performance stock set is also available for the Mossberg 500 & 88, 590 series shotguns. A drop-in replacement AR Rear Stock (RAS) is also available for AR-15/M4 carbines or other shotguns/rifles utilizing Mil-

REMINGTON 870 MODIFIED POLICE MODEL, ADAPTIVE TACTICAL FOREND AND M4 STOCK, $420

GUN TESTS GRADE: B

This is one man's idea of an all-round shotgun. Years of familiarity and trust are built into the package. With the Adaptive Tactical M4 stock, he now has a shotgun that handles in a similar fashion to his Colt M4 rifle. We liked the package overall. This is the kind of lightly modified shotgun in use in the thousands across the country. The shotgun was rated down, however, in comparison to the magazine capacity and sighting equipment of the other shotguns. This is a good shotgun but it simply isn't all it could be.



Action type	Pump; 3 in. Chamber	Forearm	Adaptive Tactical w/Light Rail
Overall Length	35.8 to 39 in.	Forearm Length	9.4 in.
Capacity	4	Front Sight	Post
Weight Unloaded	8.0 lbs.	Rear Sight	Rifle Type
Barrel	18.0 in. Long; Steel	Trigger Pull Weight	7.5 lbs.
Receiver	Steel	Warranty	None, Used
Choke	Cylinder	Telephone	(800) 243-9700
Buttstock	Adaptive Tactical M4 Type	Website	AdaptiveTactical.com
Buttstock Length of Pull	11.25 to 14.5 in.	Made In	U.S.A.



The ability to mount a combat light is an important upgrade.



The Adaptive Tactical pistol grip offers excellent adhesion when firing, a real plus with big loads.



The Adaptive Tactical stock features an effective buttpad that we really like.



The Remington's sights are an improvement over the bead front sight, but we like the Ghost Ring on the Hawk better.

REMINGTON MODEL 870 EXPRESS SYNTHETIC TACTICAL 12 GAUGE, $346

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

The Remington 870 Express Tactical is an affordable shotgun with the advantages of Remington's limited lifetime warranty and proven quality. We liked the magazine capacity, and we will take the muzzle brake, even if we could not discern its effectiveness. The shortcoming is the simple bead front sight, which limits slug accuracy past 10 yards. Conversely, as a shotgun to be used only with buckshot and only in the home, the bead front sight is a good choice.



Action	Pump, 3 in. Chamber	Forearm	Polymer
Overall Length	40 in., 38 in. w/o Screw In Tactical Brake	Forearm Length	6.75 in.
Capacity	6	Front Sight	Bead
Weight Unloaded	7.5 lbs.	Rear Sight	None
Barrel	18 in., Steel	Trigger Pull Weight	4.5 lbs.
Receiver	Steel	Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Choke	Cylinder	Telephone	(800) 243-9700
Buttstock	Polymer	Website	Remington.com
Buttstock Length of Pull	13.8 in.	Made In	U.S.A.



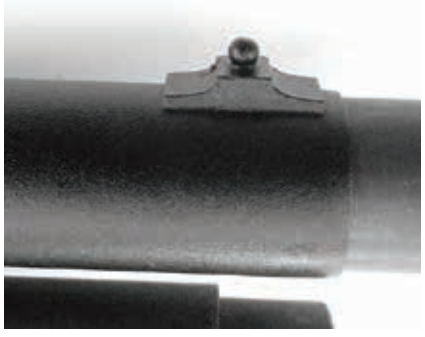
We found the muzzle brake of the 870 Express Tactical may have softened recoil to an extent with the heaviest loads.



The solid recoil pad was okay, but we preferred the vented pads of the other shotguns.



The Tactical is an able housegun.



The simple bead front sight was fast at short range, but it was less precise at longer range.

Spec sized extension tubes.

After many years of teaching the shotgun and carbine, our rater elected to add this AR stock to his personal long-serving 870 to provide a common feel between rifle and shotgun and also for ease of carry in the truck. So, we are rating both the shotgun's application and the parts. The parts are not plastic, but instead are made of high-impact polymer and have a solid feel. We fitted an inexpensive NC3 light for evaluation.

The stock is solid, and without rattles, and is easily adjusted. Being able to shorten it does help when storing the Remington in the home or when using it as a truck gun. We really like the vented recoil pad, something you do not need with the M4 rifle, but which you do need with the hard-kicking 12 gauge. We liked the parts, and if we were rating the shotgun parts alone, they would get an A. These parts added a half pound to the base Remington 870 Riot gun, making it the heaviest in the test. As might be expected, it also kicked the least, and felt recoil was mitigated by the vented recoil pad.

The Remington with Adaptive Tactical hardware fared well, but individual perception can change the assessment, so let us tell you where we started.

As an example, shooters mostly using the AR-15 liked the set up better than those using traditional shotguns for bird hunting. To each chore the proper tool. We liked the stock very much, and the forend with its mounted combat light makes a lot of sense. With a Blackhawk sling added, this is a neat tactical set up.

The primary differences among the shotguns were the sights. The slide action, trigger action, push-button safety, sliding bolt lock, and loading sequence are all the same in the three shotguns. But the shotguns featured fixed rifle-type sights, a simple bead, and Ghost Ring sights. This shotgun was the first tested, and it featured rifle sights common to riot guns. These sights are not as fast as the bead or Ghost Ring sights for rapid combat work. We fired the buckshot

at individual targets at 7, 10, and 16 yards. The densest pattern was with Hornady #4 buckshot, producing a 7x9-inch group at 16 yards. The others gave a 9x12 to 9x15-inch pattern. The hardest-kicking load was the Winchester 3-inch 00 buckshot load. The Winchester gave a large pattern, but there are 15 balls. Felt recoil was the least of the shotguns tested, although by a small margin; the shotgun was also heavier with the Adaptive Tactical stock. Before firing the shotgun for accuracy with slugs, we noted that the trigger was heavy at 7.5 pounds, common for older riot guns.

Firing the Fiocchi slugs at 15 yards, two were in a single ragged hole, touching, which we repeated with the Hawk 982. The slugs were on the point of aim because the owner had previously sighted the shotgun in. The third shell in the three-round group was less than an inch away. The owner reports 4-inch 50-yard groups.

Our Team Said: This set-up is a good one, and we feel that the Adaptive Tactical stock and forend are good features. But note it is for the shooter who wants to aim every shot rather than point the shotgun. We rated the package down a full grade based on the sights, which weren't as good as the Ghost Ring set on another shotgun. Also, this unit only has a four-round magazine capacity, and it sports a heavy trigger. It will certainly do the job, but we think another selections offers more value for the money.

Remington Express Tactical 12-Gauge Pump Action, $346

This shotgun, purchased at retail from Impactguns.com, is something of a hybrid with the standard Express Tactical (No. 25077) economy-line synthetic stock, but a tactical muzzle brake. A set of Ghost Ring sights and the muzzle brake add more than $150 retail to the Remington, per our research. In keeping with the budget theme, we selected a proven action at a fair price. This Remington features a bead front sight. Controls and action are the same as the other shotguns. The matte finish is evenly applied. The forend is the skinniest

IAC IMPORTS HAWK MODEL 982 DEFENSE 12 GAUGE, $233

GUN TESTS GRADE: A (BEST BUY)

The Hawk 982 is the least-expensive shotgun tested and among the least-expensive 12-gauge pumps we have tested. The Hawk never malfunctioned, never short cycled, and gave good results. The pattern with buckshot was slightly tighter than the other shotguns. The primary advantage discovered in firing was the excellent aperture sights. The Hawk is a Best Buy.



Action	Pump; 3 in. Chamber	Buttstock Length of Pull	13.8 in.
Overall Length	38.5 in.	Forearm	Black Polymer; 9 in. Long
Capacity	5	Front Sight	Post
Weight Unloaded	7.5 lbs.	Rear Sight	Ghost Ring Aperture
Barrel Length	18.5 in.	Trigger Pull Weight	6.0 in.
Barrel	Steel; Matte Black Finish	Warranty	1 Year
Receiver	Steel; Matte Black Finish	Telephone	(800) 243-3006
Choke	Fixed Cylinder	Website	IACShotguns.com
Buttstock	Black Polymer w/Rugger Recoil Pad	Made In	China



We particularly liked the ergonomic forend.



The front sight is well suited to precision shooting with slugs.



Some of the raters preferred the traditional stock of the Hawk 982 shotgun.



The Ghost Ring rear sight gives a trained shooter the ability to deliver fast hits. The rear sight is well protected by metal wings.



Loading and unloading the Hawk 982 is nearly identical to the Remington 870, with a slight difference in the carrier.



We tested a variety of slugs and buckshot with excellent results. From top are Hornady's Varmint Express, Fiocchi 1-ounce Aero slugs, and Winchester 3-inch 12-gauge 00 buckshot loads.



Fiocchi birdshot was used in much of the testing and was easy on the shoulder.



Hornady Critical Defense 00 buckshot is a reduced-recoil load.



These are the results of three Fiocchi Aero slugs fired at 15 yards in the Hawk 982.

of the three, but worked fine in all of our testing. The trigger action is the nicest of the three shotguns tested at 4.5 pounds. The raters agreed that the simple front bead was plenty fast on target during rapid-fire combat shooting at 7, 10, and 16 yards. At useful buckshot range, the bead gave good results. The pattern was centered, just as the other Adaptive Tactical–equipped Remington had been. The muzzle brake may have helped with recoil, but we feel that the extra weight of the previous shotgun helped more.

The Express Tactical gave good results, with nothing to complain about. Patterns were the same as the other Remington 870. The muzzle brake did not affect either patterning or recoil very much. The jagged edge, intended to allow offset when using special munitions in door breaching, is a good touch but not one we have a mission for. The removable choke tube, however, is an advantage for those who may wish to turn the shotgun to area defense. Even for personal defense in the home, some of us would prefer a tight pattern. When moving to the Fiocchi slugs, the results were interesting. Perhaps the light trigger gave an advantage, but at 15 yards, the same excellent results were had, with two slugs in one ragged hole. Not quite the same group as the others, but for practical purposes, the bead-sighted gun is good to go with slugs at 15 yards. The slugs also struck to the point of aim.

Our Team Said: The Remington Express Tactical stock is slightly thicker than the Model 982, but not enough to make a difference in handling that we could discern. The recoil pad is solid, versus the vented pads of the other shotguns. The six-round magazine is another advantage we really like. But we rated the shotgun down a half grade based on the single bead sight, which would limit application at longer range.

IAC Hawk 982 12-Gauge Pump Action, $233

This was our price for the gun from CheaperThanDirt.com. The IAC Hawk is nearly identical to the other shotguns. The slide action, safety, bolt release, and trigger are the same in appearance and function. The Hawk 982 is a direct copy of the Remington 870 made in China. The beginnings of this business date to 1960, when the original retail gun shop, know as Ivanhoe Sports Center, was located in Watertown, Massachusetts. It remained open for 25 years. A wholesale division was formed in 1974, and today is known as Interstate Arms Corp., a distributor supplying retail gun shops nationwide with firearms and accessories. IAC Imports is a division of Interstate Arms Corp. that imports reproductions of classic firearms.

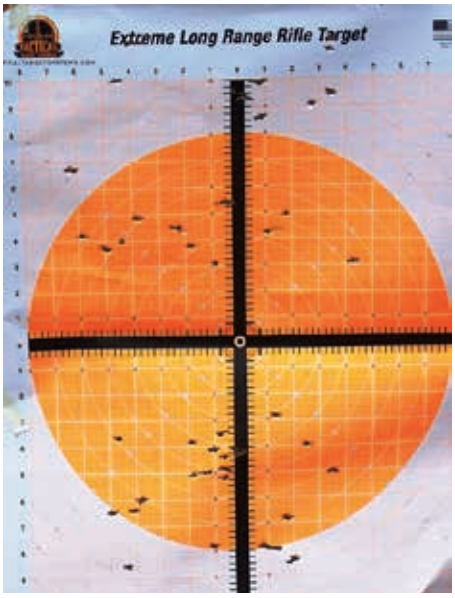
The 982 comes off well. The fit and finish are good. The blueing is attractive and evenly applied. The trigger action breaks at a clean 6 pounds, midway between the trigger-pull weight of the other shotguns. The Hawk features a 5-round magazine, also midway between the 4- and 6-shell capacity of the other shotguns. The

Hawk features synthetic furniture. The stock is slightly thinner than the Remington Express Tactical, but we could detect no advantage in either. The Hawk features a vented recoil pad, which we liked better than the Express Tactical shotgun's solid recoil pad. Recoil, however, was in the same category, we thought, with only the Adaptive Tactical–equipped shotgun showing an advantage in recoil control.

We liked the sweeping design of the forend on the Hawk better than the Remington Express. The hand isn't going to slip off the rear of this forend. The barrel is 18.5 inches versus 18 inches for the other shotguns. The real advantage of the Hawk 982, especially in this price range, was the aperture, or Ghost Ring, sights. This sight is adjustable and features solid wings to protect from falls. (Self-defense guns get beat up.) The front post is well suited to all-round use with buckshot or slugs. The action is smooth and free from binding. The only difference we could find in the Hawk and the Remington action is that the shell carrier of the Hawk does not have the small cut out in the carrier, which was designed to limit short cycles. In any case, there were no malfunctions of any of the shotguns used in this test. During the firing test, the Hawk 982 shotgun handled well. The 870 design moves quickly, and the stock design lends itself to fast handling. The 982 did not disappoint in this regard.

The Ghost Ring sight naturally centers the front post to the eye. In addressing targets at 7, 10, and 16 yards, the Hawk gave excellent results. When firing at close range with buckshot, one shotgun was about as good as the other; however, the Ghost Ring gave an advantage in speed, we thought.

The buckshot patterns were slightly tighter with the Hawk, which may have been an individual product of this shotgun, but were an inch or so tighter overall. When firing the shotguns with slugs, we had begun by firing two for practice to establish the point of impact and point-of-aim correlation. Then we fired three standing for a group, taking our time. One of the raters suggested firing five of the Fiocchi Aero slugs as quickly as possible for a group at 15 yards. We did so and found the rifle-sighted Remington was slower than the Hawk and less accurate, and the bead-sighted shotgun was even less accurate in rapid fire. The Hawk 982, however, placed the five slugs in a tight group, even when fired quickly. We think the Ghost Ring sight is a big advantage as a result. The slugs hit about 3 inches below the point of aim, but the shotgun sights had not been adjusted.



These patterns are with the Hornady #4 Varmint load. The upper group was fired with the Remington 870 Express Tactical. The lower and tighter group was fired with the Hawk 982.

Our Team Said: We were impressed with the IAC Hawk 982. The shotgun performed flawlessly with good reliability. It handled quickly, and the recoil pad design was praised by all raters. The Ghost Ring sights are ideal for personal defense. The rear sight may be removed if you wish to mount a red dot sight. Function and tactical ability with the IAC Hawk 982 were excellent for the money. The Hawk 982 is a Best Buy.

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

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Big-Bore Snubnoses Around $500: Charter Arms and Taurus

The Public Defender Polymer is the most versatile, the Classic Bulldog has the best concealability, and the Pitbull can share ammo with your pistol. But they all had issues that worry us.

We recently reviewed three 38 Special revolvers that cost about $400 and thought we would increase our budget and caliber size, and then sourced three revolvers each costing about $500 in three different big-bore calibers: 44 Special, 45 ACP, and 45 Colt, often called 45 Long Colt (LC) to ensure it's not mixed up with the Auto Colt cartridge. The three revolvers included two Charter Arms products, the Classic Bulldog in 44 Special and the newer Pitbull in 45 ACP, plus the Taurus Public Defender Polymer chambered in .410 shotshell and 45 LC.

Even though these were new revolvers, we still performed a range-rod test since there was a bit of side-to-side wiggle in the cylinders of all the revolvers. Range rods check the alignment of the chambers to the barrel bore. We also noted that the action of the Taurus seemed a bit stiff; our initial dry firing in double action found the cylinder would not fully index to the next chamber at times. Dry firing took care of the indexing issue, and all passed the range rod test. We also noted during the range-rod test the barrel of the Pitbull was not fully screwed into the frame. It was off by a fraction of a turn, enough to cock the front sight to the left when aiming the revolver. It is unacceptable that a gun leaves the factory in this condition. We anticipated and needed to use Kentucky windage with the Pitbull at the range.

In the past Charter Arms revolvers have been favorably rated, but in these two examples we found exception. The not-fully-screwed-down barrel was also the reason





The old school Bulldog Classic is Charter Arms' iconic revolver, first manufactured in 1973. We liked this revolver due to its compact size and 44 Special power.

the cylinder-to-barrel gap was so large. We measured the gap between the front of the cylinder and the forcing cone at the rear of the barrel using feeler gauges from Brownells (606-950-252WB) and found a gap of 0.010 inches for the Pitbull and the Bulldog Classic and the Taurus at 0.005 inch. A gap of 0.003 inches is desirable for a competition revolver, but up to 0.006 inches is often found. A large gap allows more gas to escape, reducing the bullet's velocity. It also means there is more flash, and if the chamber and cylinder are not perfectly aligned, a user might experience splash from burning powders and bits of shaved bullet metal. We did not experience any splash with the Charter Arms revolvers. We did note that the Classic Bulldog had about 30 fps more

The Charter Arms Pitbull (top) had good accuracy and uses the same ammo as your 45 ACP semi-automatic pistol without using moon clips. The Taurus Public Defender Polymer (middle) was awkward looking, but had good balance and fires .410 shotshells and 45 Long Colt (LC) cartridges, and it was the most accurate. The Charter Arms Classic Bulldog (bottom) offers excellent concealability for a 44 Special revolver. The rubs: The Public Defender's front sight loosened after firing, the Classic Bulldog's wood grips wiggled, and the Pitbull's barrel was not fully screwed into the frame. Some problems are worse than others.

than the published data for Hornady Critical Defense165-grain FTX bullet, which is 900 fps out of 2.5-inch barrel. The 3-inch barrel of Bulldog must have helped increase velocity. The Pitbull had noticeably less muzzle velocity compared to factory data. We assumed the reduction came because the Pitbull has a 2.5-inch barrel and the factory data for the cartridges use either a 4- or 5-inch barrel. Reduced muzzle velocity also occurred in the Taurus.

A common feature of all three revolvers was a safety transfer bar. This system prevents the hammer from striking the firing pin unless the trigger is pulled fully to the rear.

These revolvers are made for close-in work, but we still tested accuracy out to 25 yards. Since the Taurus offers the ability to fire .410 shotshells as well as cartridges, we sourced some CCI shot cartridges in 44 Special. CCI manufactures shotshells in 45 ACP, but warns against using the the cartridges in revolvers since the crimp that holds the shot in the cartridge case may interfere with the rotation of cylinder after being fired. One of our team members regularly carries a revolver loaded with bird shot cartridges and bullet cartridges when we walks his dog in the woods. He's equipped to deal with snakes as well as bears, depending on what chamber he lets fly.

Obviously, the CCI cartridges do not have the power or range of a 410 shotshell, but in the situation when an ornery water moccasin claims your back yard as its new sunning space, we wanted a way to evict the viper. Part of our testing included how far we could shoot the 44 Special shot cartridges and .410 loads before the pattern became too large and ineffective. At close range, these shotshells have an advantage, but at longer ranges they become a liability. This is important to understand especially with a handgun like the Taurus, which fires .410 shells designed for defense. Imagine you are in a situation with bystanders and fire a shotshell. You may unintentionally hit bystanders. We acquired personal-

CHARTER ARMS PITBULL
MODEL 64520 45 ACP, $509
GUN TESTS GRADE: D

The Pitbull had a good finish and functioned as expected but the barrel was not fully seated. This big miss in Charter Arms' quality-control process pushed this gun's grade way down.

Action Type	Double Action
Overall Length	7.2 in.
Barrel Length	2.5 in.
Sight Radius	4.2 in.
Overall Height	5.1 in.
Maximum Width	1.6 in.
Weight Unloaded	22.0 oz.
Weight Loaded	24.5 oz.
Cylinder Gap	.010
Capacity	5
Frame Finish	Nitride
Barrel/Cylinder Finish	Nitride
Frame Front Strap Height	1.6 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.0 in.
Grip	Checkered Rubber, Grooves
Grip Thickness (max)	1.2 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.0 in.
Front Sight	Ramped Blade
Rear Sight	Fixed Groove
Trigger Pull Weight (DA)	12 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight (SA)	5.5 lbs.
Safety	Internal Transfer Bar
Warranty	Limited Lifetime Warranty
Telephone	(203) 922-1652
Website	CharterArms.com
Made In	U.S.A.





The Pitbull's sight picture was large and easy to acquire.



The ejector has a built-in spring-loaded plunger, so no moon clips are required to shoot 45 ACPs.



The 45 ACP cases are shorter and were more easily ejected from the Pitbull.



Note the barrel is off center (arrow). Shouldn't have left the factory in this condition. It made shooting cockeyed.

CARTRIDGE RANGE DATA

Charter Arms Bulldog Classic 44 Special	**Hornady Classic 44 Sp. 180-gr. XTP**	**HSM 44 Sp. 200-gr. RNFP**	**Hornady Critical Defense 44 Sp. 165-gr. FTX**
Average Velocity	746 fps	722 fps	930 fps
Muzzle Energy	222 ft.-lbs.	232 ft.-lbs.	317 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	2.2 in.	2.6 in.	3.3 in.
Average Group	3.1 in.	3.2 in.	3.7 in.
Charter Arms Pitbull 45 ACP	**Federal American Eagle 45 ACP 230-gr. FMJ**	**Winchester Defend 45 ACP 230-gr. JHP**	**HPR 45 ACP 185-gr. JHP**
Average Velocity	706 fps	776 fps	873 fps
Muzzle Energy	255 ft.-lbs.	308 ft.-lbs.	313 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	2.7 in.	3.0 in.	2.9 in.
Average Group	2.8 in.	3.2 in.	3.3 in.
Taurus PDP 45 Long Colt	**Federal American Eagle 45 LC 225-gr. JSP**	**Hornady Critical Defense 45 LC 185-gr. FTX**	**Winchester PDX1 Defender 45 LC 225-gr. JHP**
Average Velocity	786 fps	860 fps	764 fps
Muzzle Energy	309 ft.-lbs.	304 ft.-lbs.	292 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.6 in.	2.0 in.	2.2 in.
Average Group	2.2 in.	2.6 in.	2.8 in.

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

defense shells from Hornady, Winchester, Federal, and target/hunting shells from Aguila to determine when the pattern of the load increased to a size where the pattern was larger than the intended target and projectiles hit unintended targets. We used a pair of 18-inch-wide targets set side by side in a CTK Precision P3 Ultimate Target Stand ($60; ctkprecision.com) to simulate a threat and a non-threat target and fired at one of the targets with the shotshells to determine what range the shot pattern was larger than the threat target and overlapped on the non-threat target. Here's more of what we found testing these big-bore snubnose revolvers.



The Pitbull had a 0.010-inch gap between the cylinder and barrel; up to 0.006 inches is typical revolver spec.



Left: Here's a detailed looked at the controls on the Pitbull. The hammer offered good purchase for the thumb. The latch operated without incident. The nitrided finish was evenly applied.

Charter Arms Pitbull Model 64520 45 ACP, $509

The Pitbull is the latest Charter Arms revolver designed to fire a rimless, semi-automatic pistol cartridge. This 5-shot model fires 45 ACP, and our testers liked the fact they could fire the same cartridge they use in their 1911 or other 45 ACP pistol in the Charter Arms. This is a stout, compact revolver made with a 416 stainless steel one-piece frame. The grip and trigger guard are made from an aluminum alloy. The stainless-steel barrel has the front-ramp sight milled out of the top side and, as mentioned, the barrel was not fully screwed into the frame. The rear sight is a groove milled along the top side of the frame. We felt these sights were usable, except for the crooked front sight. The ejector rests in a full lug under the barrel. The Charter Arms Bulldog Classic does not have a lug, and the ejector is exposed. The edge of the lug was rounded, making the revolver easier to holster. The cylinder edges were also chamfered to aid reholstering.

CHARTER ARMS BULLDOG CLASSIC
MODEL 34431 44 SPECIAL, $436
GUN TESTS GRADE: B-

The Bulldog had good accuracy for such a small revolver. The double-action trigger was smooth. The wood grip fit was loose and unacceptable.

Action Type	DA/SA
Overall Length	7.5 in.
Barrel Length	3.0 in.
Sight Radius	4.7 in.
Overall Height	4.7 in.
Maximum Width	1.4 in.
Weight Unloaded	20.0 oz.
Weight Loaded	22.7 oz.
Cylinder Gap	.010 in.
Capacity	5
Frame Finish	Black
Barrel/Cylinder Finish	Black
Frame Front Strap Height	2.1 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.2 in.
Grip	Checkered Wood
Grip Thickness (max)	1.2 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	4.8 in.



Front Sight	Ramped Blade
Rear Sight	Fixed Groove
Trigger Pull Weight (DA)	13.0 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight (SA)	3.2 lbs.
Safety	Internal Transfer Bar
Warranty	Limited Lifetime Warranty
Telephone	(203) 922-1652
Website	CharterArms.com
Made In	U.S.A



Note how rough the rear sight groove in the Bulldog (top) is compared to the rear sight groove in the Pitbull (bottom).



The Bulldog had large sights that made it easy to aim.



The cylinder-to-barrel gap measured 0.010 inches, but we did not experience splash nor lose muzzle velocity.



Since the ejector rod is not in a shroud, the cylinder can be opened by pulling on the ejector rod inline of the cylinder latch. This old design still works well, in the opinion of our testers. It may be dated, but isn't obsolete.

This Pitbull wears a new nitride finish that we felt was very well executed. The grips were typical checkered rubber with finger grooves, which is what we have come to expect with many Charter Arms revolvers. They fit our hands well, were thin, and helped reduce felt recoil. The grips did not interfere with unloading empty cases, an issue we had with the Bulldog Classic and Public Defender. Part of the reason is the 45 ACP cases are much shorter than the 44 Special and 45 LC cases.

The double-action trigger was a bit gritty to start, but smoothed up after use and measured 12 pounds. In single-action mode, the trigger broke at 5.5 pounds. The trigger was serviceable and we felt suitable for a defensive handgun. The revolver was also easy to manipulate — cocking the hammer, lowering the hammer, opening the cylinder — without requiring strong hand muscles. The trigger is serrated so your finger does not slip when pressing back in double action. The unique feature of the Pitbull series is the ejector has a built-in spring-loaded plunger for each chamber that is depressed when a cartridge is inserted into the chamber and snaps back out into the extractor groove of the rimless cartridge case. This system elminates the need for moon clips. The chambers are also stepped, so 45 ACP cases headspace on the case mouth.

At the range the Pitbull, shot to the left, as expected, so we used Kentucky windage to test accuracy, and we found with ball and JHP ammo, this revolver could consistently shoot 3-inch 5-shot groups. We noticed the most felt recoil with cartridges in the Pitbull due to the narrow rubber grip. It was tolerable but noticeable. The Pitbull had the longest grip, which made it easier to shoot but harder to conceal. We also noticed that loading the 230-grain FMJ American Eagle brand ammo, we needed to ensure the ejector was depressed to insert the the round. The other 45 ACP cartridges were much easier to insert into the chambers. We also smartly pressed the ejector rod to see if the

ejector would slip past the empty cases and found we could only trip up the Pitbull once. In that instance, we needed a screwdriver or other slender object to act as a tool to eject the case.

Our Team Said: The Pitbull was easy to use and like. If it was not for the improperly installed barrel, the Pitbull would have rated much higher.

Charter Arms Bulldog Classic Model 34431 44 Special, $436

The Bulldog Classic is Charter Arms' iconic revolver, first manufactured in 1973. It looks old school with the tapered 3-inch barrel, exposed ejector rod, and checkered walnut grips. We liked this revolver from the get-go due to its compact size and 44 Special chambering.

Testers who have had Bulldog revolvers noted the finish color was a purplish blue. The finish of older revolvers changes over time due to the alloy frame turning purplish, while the barrel and cylinder stayed a dark blue. In hand, this is a lightweight revolver, feeling a lot like a 38 Special except for the fatter cylinder, which holds five rounds of 44 Special. We noticed the nicely-shaped wood grip wiggled on the grip frame, so we tightened the grip screw, but to no avail. A shim would be needed to take up the space between the metal grip frame and the inside of the grip. Again, this is another ding on Charter Arms for allowing a revolver through QA with a wobbly grip. We found another issue with the Bulldog's finishing, too. The groove in the top strap, which acts as the rear sight, looked like it was ground out with a Dremel tool and then finished. The rest of the revolver had a nice polished look, but the rear-sight groove looked rough.

The wood grip was just large enough to help dissipate recoil into the palm of our hands, yet still be very concealable. The checkering was fine, and as mentioned, the grips were loose, which we knew would not help in accuracy testing. We expected the grip to crack during testing, because it was so loose the metal frame moved position each time the revolver was fired.

The double-action trigger had a pull weight of about 13 pounds; single action was about 3.2 pounds. The trigger was grooved, so even in recoil our finger stayed put. In DA mode for all three revolvers, we felt stacking. The serrated cylinder latch slides forward to open the cylinder, though you could pull forward on the ejector rod to gain access to the cylinder's chambers. A slight ring appeared around the cylinder after dry firing and testing, as did with the other two revolvers.

At the range the Bulldog felt surprisingly small and compact to hold five 44 Special cartridges. Using a rest at 25 yards, we were pleasantly surprised to get 3-inch average groups with five rounds. The 25-yard accuracy test is much farther than the distance you would typically be expected to use these revolvers, but we wanted to push the limits of these snubnoses. With the Hornady Classic 180-grain XTP round, we were able to shoot a 2.2-inch 5-shot group at 25 yards using a rest. That was excellent considering the revolver was compact and had fixed sights. At closer ranges we were able to get some excellent groups. The fuller and slightly fatter grip made the Bulldog pleasant to shoot. Remember, this lightweight revolver does not have much weight



From the business ends, the Taurus (left) shows its mass, while the Bulldog (middle) has the least bulk.



We preferred the Taurus (left) grip over the Bulldog (middle) and Pitbull (right) grips.



Under the Pitbull's grips, we found a coil spring that produced a small bit of stack in double-action mode.



On the Bulldog, we noticed a slight amount os stacking in DA mode, but we felt the Bulldog's trigger was serviceable.

to help absorb recoil. In fact, it was the lightest of all three guns tested. To add versatility to the Bulldog, we fired some CCI 0.25-ounce #9 shot cartridges at 6 feet — about as close as you would want to get to a copperhead or cottonmouth — and found we could get a pattern of about 8 inches across, about the size of a paper plate. As we went farther out, the pattern grew increasingly larger, as expected, so much so that at twice the distance, 12 feet, the pattern was not very dense. We would use the CCI shot loads only on snakes and perhaps rats. On larger vermin, the rounds would not have the desired killing effect.

We found more not to like about the grip when ejecting empties. If we pressed the ejector rod fully out, one of the empty cases would get trapped by the edge of the grip. These snubnoses are more "get away" pistols, allowing you to fire at close range and get to safety, so a fast reload may not be required. But we still feel that the wood grip, as much as it felt good in hand, was a liability. We'd deep-six the factory wood grip and get an aftermarket wood or rubber grip with similar dimensions.

For the concealed-carry portion of the test, we used holsters designed for a S&W J-frame to tote both Charter Arms revolvers and found the size and weight of the Bulldog was the most comfortable. We had no available holster to tote the Taurus other than a shoulder holster, but then again the Taurus is a wholly different revolver experience.

Our Team Said: The Bulldog is a compact, accurate, and inexpensive defensive revolver, but the wobbly grip and rough-looking rear sight groove caused us to grade it lower.

SHOTSHELL RANGE DATA

Winchester Super-X **.410 Bore 000 Buck** Pattern Size @ 5 Yards/10 Yards	**Taurus** **Public Defender Polymer** 5 in./8 in.
Hornady Critical Defense **.410 Bore one 41 cal. FTX slug,** **Two 35 cal. balls** Pattern Size @ 5 Yards/10 Yards	**Taurus** **Public Defender** **Polymer** 1.7 in./4 in.
Winchester PDX1 Defender **.410 Bore, three discs** Pattern Size @ 5 Yards/10 Yards	**Taurus** **Public Defender Polymer** 1.1 in./11 in.
Winchester PDX1 Defender **.410 Bore, 12 BBs** Pattern Size @ 5 Yards/10 Yards	**Taurus** **Public Defender Polymer** 2.5 in./20 in.

Winchester PDX1 Defender loads include both discs and BBs.

Aguila **.410 Bore ½ oz. #6 shot** 5-Yard Pattern Size	**Taurus** **Public Defender Polymer** 26 in.
Federal Personal Defense **.410 Bore 7/16 oz. #4 shot** Pattern Size	**Taurus** **Public Defender Polymer** 23 in.
CCI **44 Special ¼ oz. #9 shot** Pattern Size (@ 6 Feet/12 Feet)	**Charter Arms** **Bulldog** 8 in./18 in.



Right: The Bulldog was compact and offered just enough grip for controllability; too bad the grip wiggled. The hammer spur and cylinder latch were coarsely serrated, making it easy to operate the Bulldog.

Taurus Public Defender Polymer Model 4510PLYFS .410/45 Long Colt, $514

The Polymer Public Defender is an awkward looking revolver until you pick it up and hold it. The Public Defender has nice balance, but don't think this is as compact as either of the Charter Arms revolvers. The Taurus is large, and unlike the Judge, which the Public Defender is derived from, the Public Defender is as compact a revolver as you can get, especially with a cylinder that is chambered for 2.5-inch-long .410 shotshells. The barrel is a stubby 2 inches, and the ribbed rubber grip is as compact as Taurus's CIA J-frame clone.

As the name implied, the Polymer Public Defender is constructed with a polymer frame and polymer grip, which dramatically reduces the weight of the revolver compared to the steel-frame Judge. A steel barrel and cylinder window is imbedded into the polymer. The frame and grip are screwed together similar to how the Ruger LCR is built. The Public Defender is a large snubnose, and in our opinion, it is very manageable in tight spaces, like the inside of a vehicle. The Taurus has a cylinder that is nearly twice the length of either

Charters Arms cylinders. That longer cylinder makes the Taurus versatile, as it can fire .410-bore shotshells and 45 LC cartridges.

Unlike the other revolvers tested, the Taurus has a windage-adjustable rear sight. The front sight is a fiber optic unit. These sights offered the best sight picture of all three guns. Under recoil, the fiber-optic tube loosened, and if left as is, would most likely be lost.



The bulk of the Public Defender (center) is apparent next to the Bulldog (left) and Pitbull (right).



On the Taurus Public Defender Polymer, the grip is small, requiring shooters to curl the small finger under the butt.



Right: On the Public Defender Polymer, the rear sight is adjustable for windage only; we needed to adjust the sight to hit point of aim at 25 yards.



Right: The Taurus uses a metal mainspring support inserted into the polymer grip. Trigger-pull weight was 13 pounds in double action.

To load the Public Defender, the cylinder latch, which is built into the oversized recoil shield, is pressed forward. The latch is serrated, flush with the shield, and on the bottom portion of the shield, so you had to pay attention and get a good purchase on it to operate. We felt the revolver was built well, with the crane having a detent ball that snapped into place in the metal frame.

The trigger weight measured about 13 pounds in double action and 6 pounds in single-action mode. The trigger has a smooth face. The hammer was easy to cock back, and it was mostly concealed by the large recoil shield. Taurus made an effort to ensure the Public Defender was snag free. The tiny compact grip was ribbed and had finger grooves. Most team members had to curl their small finger under the butt. It felt good in hand and was very pointable. As we spent time with the Public Defender, we liked how it performed and admired its versatility.

At 25 yards using a rest, we started off with 45 LC cartridges and were pleased with the 5-shot groups. With Federal American Eagle 225-gr. JSP ammo, the Taurus gave us a best 5-shot group of 1.6 inches. On average with Hornady Critical Defense 185-gr. FTX bullets and Winchester PDX1 Defender 225-gr. JHP bullets, we averaged just under 3 inches for 5-shot groups. The heft of the revolver made recoil of the 45 LC cartridges manageable. When we moved to the .410 shells we experienced more recoil.

Many ammunition manufacturers have produced defensive .410 shotshells specifically for .410 revolvers, so we acquired some Critical Defense from Hornady, which uses one 41-caliber FTX slug and two 35-caliber ball projectiles, and some PDX1 Defender from Winchester that is loaded with three discs and 12 BB shot, and Federal Personal Defense, which is loaded with 7/16-oz. of #4 shot. We also tried some Winchester Super-X 000 buck and a target load from Aguila loaded with a half-ounce of #4 shot. At close range, the defense loads produced some tight patterns. The Aguila target load had the largest pattern, and we would reserve that for snake eradication. At 5 yards, this shotshell sent a dense powerful blast. It was a lot louder than the CCI 44 Special shotshell cartridges, but the need for a follow up shot is greatly reduced. For self-defense, the loads gave us impressive patterns at close range. At 5 yards we were able to keep the Hornady Critical Defense and Winchester Super-X 000 buck on one of the side-by-side targets. The Hornady had a 1.7-inch pattern and the Winchester 000 buck measured 5 inches. The large projectiles from Winchester PDX1 Defender shotshells patterned nicely on the threat target at 1.1 inches, but the non-threat target was splashed with pellets. The BBs created an 11-inch pattern. We had similar results with the Federal Personal Defense #4 shot and Aguila loads, 26- and 23 inches, respectively. As we moved the target

TAURUS PUBLIC DEFENDER POLYMER MODEL 4510PLYFS .410/45 LONG COLT, $514

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

The Public Defender offers versatility along with good accuracy. It had good balance for such an awkward-looking revolver.

Action Type	Double Action
Overall Length	7.6 in.
Barrel Length	2.0 in.
Sight Radius	4.1 in.
Overall Height	4.6 in.
Maximum Width	1.5 in.
Weight Unloaded	27.0 oz.
Weight Loaded	29.7-30.1 oz. (depending on load)
Cylinder Gap	0.005 in.
Capacity	5
Frame Finish	Black
Barrel/Cylinder Finish	Black
Frame Front Strap Height	1.6 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.0 in.
Grip	Ribbed Rubber
Grip Thickness (max)	1.1 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.2 in.



Front Sight	Red Fiber Optic
Rear Sight	Windage Adj. Notch
Trigger Pull Weight (DA)	13.0 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight (SA)	6.0 lbs.
Safety	Internal Transfer Bar
Warranty	Limited Lifetime Warranty
Telephone	(800) 327-3776
Website	TaurusUSA.com
Made In	Brazil



The Taurus had the best sight picture due to the orange fiber-optic tube. To our dismay, it came loose during testing.



Note the detent ball (arrow) in the crane; it locks up the frame.



The case closest to the grip would get hung up on the grip, requiring the user to rotate the cylinder to clear the grip and extract the case.



The cylinder latch forms the bottom part of the recoil shield and is flush with the top, so it took extra effort to manipulate the latch. Some may see this as nitpicking, but anything that slows reloads is worth noting.

farther away to 10 yards, the pattern sizes naturally increased, with the Hornady creating a 4-inch pattern. Winchester 000 created an 8-inch pattern, and the Winchester PDX1 Defender loads created a 2.5-inch pattern with the discs and a 20-inch pattern with the BBs. Be aware that at longer distances, shotshell loads disperse and are less effective on the intended target and may accidentally hit bystanders. Remember, you have better control over a bullet than a shotshell. In our opinion, at closer distances defensive 410 shotshells can be effective.

We did note that the Aguila and Federal shotshells had to be pressed into the chambers, while the Winchester and Hornady shells dropped into the chambers like a cartridge. Shells not fully seated in the chamber did not allow the cylinder to be closed, or if partially seated, did not allow the cylinder to rotate. When ejecting the shells, the defense loads were the easiest to expel. The target loads, however, required us to tap the ejector rod against the wooden shooting bench to pop them out of the chamber. Also, since the shells are so long, the shell closest to the grip when the cylinder is open gets hung up, requiring the user to rotate the cylinder to fully remove the shell.

The trade off with the Taurus' versatility is its poor ability to be concealed. The Public Defender is a heavy, large handgun made as compact as possible, but it is still larger than most 5-shot concealable revolvers. We carried the Taurus in a shoulder holster, which was fine for jacket and coat weather, but not when it is warm.

Our Team Said: The Public Defender is versatile, being able to fire .410 shells and 45 LC cartridges. If you are looking for a large-bore revolver for concealed carry, the Taurus may be too large for average-size concealed-carry-license holders. It does make sense for vehicle and nightstand use.

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

1911 Mags: Some Are Good, And Some Should Be Avoided

Mec-Gar topped a field of 16 magazine makers you will likely recognize, including Brownells, Kimber, Wilson Combat, Ed Brown, Remington, Colt, ProMag, Chip McCormick, and others.

Magazines for the 1911 pistol have evolved more during the past two decades than during any other time since the pistol's introduction. The bane of the 1911 is cheaply made magazines, with poor ammunition close behind. For many years, the only choices were Colt factory magazines, which were usually high quality, then GI magazines, and poorly made gun-show magazines. Some were marked COLT 45 on the base in bold letters, and these usually meant the shooter was the real deal. At a time when new Colt magazines were around $15, aftermarket magazines sold for as little as $4, and most of them were not worth the aggravation. GI magazines were good quality, but shooters often found them bent and worn out, unless they were new in the wrapper. Quite a bit of barrel feed-ramp polish and tuning of extractors went on that probably was tied to ammunition and magazine problems. Some of the aftermarket magazines were not properly welded. In other cases, the follower was too tight in the magazine body; and in other instances, the magazine springs were weak. Others had poorly attached buttplates, that gave way when dropped on the ground during IPSC competition. Some survived, others did not.

The basic construction of the magazine itself has changed from sheet steel to aluminum and plastic followers versus metal followers. We have examined quite a few magazines that invited a situation called false slide lock. The follower appeared to catch the slide lock, but the slide lock was actually on the wrong shelf, which isn't good for any of the parts. A 1911 feeds by the loading block on the bottom of the slide stripping the cartridge forward as the slide moves forward. The cartridge case rim catches under the extractor and is pressed forward. Some feel that it is a good thing that the bullet nose snugs a little over the feed ramp and bumps the cartridge case head into the breech face as the cartridge enters the chamber. Some magazines, notably the Wilson Combat, allow the bullet nose to strike much higher on the ramp, which results in missing the feed ramp's edges more so than others.

It goes without saying that magazines should be cleaned periodically, dust and lint removed, and that the magazine springs should be checked often to ensure positive function, but we knew design and execution were even further up the pipeline of good function than



As the results added up, we found a number of first-class magazines, though a couple were pricey.



Magazines without a base pad took a beating but survived.



Fired offhand, the magazines never failed with standard loads, but +P loads were another matter.



We prefer a base pad, although this adds height to a pistol to be used for concealed carry.



This was par for the course for several magazines — losing a cartridge or two during the drop test.



This Colt magazine almost pushed a cartridge out during the drop test. We noted the cartridges were ejected forward, as in a normal feed cycle.



We like the feed-lip and feed-follower design of the Mec-Gar, left, better than the ACT Mag, right.

maintenance, so with this in mind, we elected to test a number of 1911 magazines and to report our findings. In some cases the problems were experienced during testing of 1911 handguns, so we knew what to look for. But, broadly, this has been a long-term test for us. While some tests take weeks to complete, this one lasted 24 months due to the need to keep magazines loaded for a 12-month interval to gauge spring fatigue. Both objective and subjective criteria were used to grade the mags, with function being most important, and fit and finish being behind that.

In the test, we used three primary firearms to assess function: a High Standard (Armscor) Government Model 1911, a Springfield Range Officer Operator 1911, and a Remington R1 Commander. All are proven handguns that have proven reliable, with at least 1,000 rounds previously fired in each handgun.

For the magazines themselves, we used at least two examples of each, looking at this lineup of grading points:

Step 1: Making a visual inspection of fit, finish, and welds.

Step 2: Assessing fit of a loaded magazine into the magazine well of each pistol, locking it in place, and closing the slide.

Step 3: Determining difficulty of ejecting an unloaded magazine when the release button is pressed.

Step 4: Noticing any difficulty when dropping the slide on a loaded magazine.

Step 5: Grading feed reliability. Ease of loading and lack of follower binding were noted. We tested the magazines with three loads: A handload using the Magnus Cast Bullets 200-grain semi-wadcutter, properly loaded to a 1.20-inch overall length; a handload using a Hornady 185-grain XTP, also loaded to a 1.20-inch OAL; and a load using the Hornady 230-grain XTP at an OAL of 1.20 inches.

Then we progressed to a firing test. Since +P loads increase slide velocity to the point the magazine spring may not keep up, we fired the magazines that passed previous tests with seven rounds each of a Black Hills Ammunition 230-grain JHP +P. After firing, the follower was checked for excess wear.

Then, for those that remained, we dropped loaded magazines on a concrete pad from 5 feet, attempting a base drop. Each magazine was given two drops. Finally, we left the surviving magazines fully loaded for 12 months topped off with Winchester 230-grain FMJ ammunition. Once the date had passed, they had to come up shooting.

During the test, one of the raters noted that slide-lock function is critical to 1911 handguns. He removed an Armscor 1911 from early testing due to a slide-stop problem. Proper dimensions include a protrusion of 0.200 inch from the back interior of the lever. Slide-stop problems may lead one to believe the magazine is bad. A visual and micrometer test also indicates if magazine feed lips have spread. The original dimensions should be 0.375 inch across the feed lips. All magazines tested were well within specifications. If the magazine feed lips are no longer parallel, then they should be discarded. A measurement of 0.390 inch across the feed lips isn't good, so at that point, the magazine should be discarded. The only magazine that spread to the point of non-serviceability during the tests was a single Triple K magazine.

We dropped a magazine or two on the feed lips instead



An Armscor 1911 and handloads were the primary test items.

of the base pad, by accident, and despite a reputation 1911 magazines have for thin feed lips, none of the magazines were affected. This was an abuse, rather than a test not included in test criteria. During the drop tests, none of the cartridges popped out the top of the magazine, but rather pushed out forward, as they were designed to feed. Just the same, the tighter the magazine spring, perhaps the less likely the cartridge might be lost. Also a number of raters have seen magazines hit the pavement during competition and seen the base pad come loose and the spring and follower fall out. We dropped the magazines from slightly higher than a normal shooting stance, and the magazines were loaded, but none came apart. Here's what we found:

Mec-Gar Magazine, $24

Available from Mec-Gar.com, the Mec-Gar and the ACT Mag are similar in appearance, however, and it is a small thing, the Mec-Gar does not have the ridge or weld line seen on the ACT Mag. We also like the synthetic follower of the Mec-Gar better. The Mec-Gar magazines' base pads were more secure, however, on a number of magazines tested (and we used a half dozen as they were supplied with Rock Island Armory test guns) two had some loose motion. The Mec-Gar magazines fit as designed, functioned with all loads, passed the drop test without failure, and also passed the 12-month storage test. This magazine was tied with the Brownells for best value, but there are times then the Mec-Gar is found on sale for an even better price.



GUN TESTS GRADE: A (BEST BUY)

Brownells 1911 8-Round Magazine, $24

Available from Brownells.com, these mags' fit and finish are good, with a more matte finish than blued. We particularly like the concave follower that rides high in the magazine body. The Brownells magazine is a workmanlike design that aced the tests. These magazines passed all drop tests and firing tests. The price is fair, our team thought, for the performance.



GUN TESTS GRADE: A (BEST BUY)

Cobra 8-Round Magazine, $37

Made by Tripp Research and available from Brownells.com, the Cobra magazine showed excellent fit and finish. The magazine presents the bullet nose at a good height in relation to the feed ramp and always gives good feeding. We liked the base pads as well. While pricey, the Tripp-designed magazine aced every test. It is a good magazine worth its price.



GUN TESTS GRADE: A

D&L Sports 8-Round Magazine, $50

Available from DLSports.com, this is the most expensive magazine tested. The body is well made and features a rugged finish. The magazine spring is tied with the Ed Brown and Cobra magazine for tightness. The D&L Sports magazines passed all testing, including the 12-month storage test. This magazine is pricey, but it works.



GUN TESTS GRADE: A

Kimber KimPro Tac-Mag Factory Magazine, $33

Available from KimberAmerica.com, the Kimber magazine is well made and finished and features a flat follower. It is a classic design in appearance and is used in the company's top-end pistols. Features include Teflon-coated stainless-steel follower, Rocket wire spring, and large round-count recognition holes. A quick-change floorplate permits the immediate attachment of one of three included bases: A conventional stainless-steel plate, slim bumper pad for carry, or a thick bumper pad for competition or use with extended magazine wells. The Kimber magazine is more expensive than the other traditional magazines, and it did not suffer a single failure of any type during the firing tests, drop tests, and long-term storage tests.



GUN TESTS GRADE: A

Wilson Combat 1911 Elite Tactical Magazine Full-Size, 8 Round, $33

Available from WilsonCombat.com, the new ETM magazine features a longer body to contain a stronger magazine spring so it will feed eight rounds reliably. Just the same, our most experienced 1911 shooters recommend loading eight rounds total for good reliability; that is, one in the chamber and seven in the magazine. The ETM exhibits good fit and finish. It passed all drop tests, lock tests, feed tests, and the 12-month testing.



GUN TESTS GRADE: A



The Ed Brown magazine is well made and functional.

Ed Brown 8-Pack Magazine with Base Pad, $37

Available from MidwayUSA.com, fit, finish, and function of the Ed Browns were excellent. The firing tests were passed without incident, as well as the 12-months-loaded testing. Magazine spring tension, subjectively, was the strongest of the standard-length magazines. Feed reliability is good. The magazines passed all testing save for the drop test, when one of the two magazines lost two cartridges.

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

Remington R1 1911 Magazine, $21.70

Purchased from Cheaperthandirt.com, this magazine may be among the best buys in factory-branded magazines. Marked Remington on the base, it works well in all 1911 handguns. Finish is good to match the Remington R1 blued finish. The follower is nylon with a steel insert. During the drop test, the R1 magazines lost two cartridges on average and passed all other tests. We liked these magazines better than the Colt magazines as an example among factory magazines.



GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

Colt Brand 8-Round Magazine, $22 Blued Steel, $24 Stainless Steel

Available from MidwayUSA.com, the blued magazines were tight going in, but we noticed the stainless magazines were not, for some reason. During drop testing, each Colt magazine lost two to three cartridges. This was true of both blued and stainless magazines. Other firing tests were passed, and all other testing was passed. Coupled with the tight fit of the blued-steel magazines and the drop-test problems, we rated these magazines individually, as noted below.



GUN TESTS GRADE: A- (STAINLESS)

GUN TESTS GRADE: B- (BLUED)

Gun Pro Sure Fire, $35

Available from Gunpro.us, this magazine is advertised as an anti-nose-dive magazine. It is intended to prevent the bullet nose from pushing downward on the feed ramp. The tab that accomplishes this may work best with FMJ bullets. The Gun Pro magazine is similar in appearance to other magazines. There is space in the magazine body for the 8-round follower and magazine, and it isn't a compressed design. The difference is that at the right side of the magazine body, there is a cut-out section that is reminiscent of a frame-lock knife. The tab doesn't affect normal feeding, but would possibly prevent a bullet nose dive. At any rate, the magazine is well made and works as designed. During the drop test, the magazine lost an average of one cartridge in each example.

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-



The Gun Pro magazine features a tab in the body to prevent nose-dive malfunction.

ProMag Magazine 1911 8-Round Steel, $25.49

Available from PromagIndustries.com, these are listed for $25.49 at the ProMag website. But we walked into the local Academy Sports and picked up two at $20 each. Fit and finish were OK, however, we did not like the light-feeling magazine spring pressure. Also, the base pad wasn't rock solid, but neither was it very loose. The ProMag did not regurgitate any cartridges during the drop test. It also passed the 12-month test. The only blip was a failure to feed during firing of the +P loads. This was because the slide velocity overcame what we perceived as a weak magazine spring. Just the same, overall the magazine did well. Based on rattling when shaken and a failure



with +P loads, we rated the ProMag down a full grade.

GUN TESTS GRADE: B

ASC Magazine, $13

Available from Surplusammo.com, this is the least expensive magazine tested. The ASC passed all firing tests. Fit and finish of the ASC is OK. However, the base pads had loose fore and aft motion. During loading, the follower body tended to bind at the rear. While the magazine locked in and functioned, one of the two magazines failed to lock the slide open on the last shot in each pistol from the beginning. The other occasionally failed to lock the slide open on the last shot. Each passed the drop test without losing a cartridge, and both also passed the 12-month spring-fatigue test.

GUN TESTS GRADE: B-



The ASC magazine was the least expensive tested.

ACT Mag 8-Round Magazine, $22

Available from ACT-mag.com, the ACT Mag is comparable to the Mec-Gar in appearance, but with more noticeable welds. The ACT MAG passed all firing tests. There was more play in the base pad than we like. The magazine passed all testing, save for an average of a single round popping out of each magazine during drop testing. While similar in appearance to the Mec-Gar, we prefer the Mec-Gar based on finish and less play in the base pad. We also like the Mec-Gar follower better. The rating was based on rounds popping out during the drop test and the looser base pads, which were not as loose as the ASC magazine.



GUN TESTS GRADE: B-



Chip McCormick 8-Round Magazine, $33

Available from ChipMcCormickmags.com, four examples of this popular magazine made it into the test. Fit and finish were good. However, one magazine was tight going in the magazine well. During firing of the +P load, one of the magazines proved to have a weak spring and short cycled. Other tests, including the 12-month test, were passed. We rated the magazines down based on one failure to feed and the tight fit of a magazine.



Firing tests were a prime aspect of the magazine evaluations. But there are other ways to narrow down the selections by using fit and finish as excluders.

GUN TESTS GRADE: B-

Springfield Armory Factory Magazine, $23.50

Available from Springfield-Armory.com, one of the magazines delivered new with a TRP pistol caused a short cycle. We looked closer and found it was not a 1911 break-in malfunction, but instead a problem with a weak magazine spring. During the drop test, the Springfield magazines lost two cartridges on average. We rated the magazine down a full point on this weak spring and a half point on losing the cartridges during the drop test.



GUN TESTS GRADE: B-

Triple-K 7-Round Magazine, $15

Available from Cabelas.com, we found the Triple-K magazine's follower to be a poor fit. It seemed to protrude too much from the feed lips when the magazine is not loaded. This could possibly damage an aluminum feed ramp. The magazine fit and locked fine; however, during the drop tests, these magazines consistently lost two to four cartridges. The firing test was passed with standard loads, but not the +P. A Triple K magazine was the only magazine not to pass the 12-month spring test, losing magazine spring tension or perhaps the follower moved forward.



GUN TESTS GRADE: C

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

9mm Pistols: Uzi Mini Pro, MPA Defender, and SIG Sauer MPX-P

Are these pistols a suitable choice for home defense? We found the Uzi Pro to be frustrating, and the MPX-P cost a lot. The Defender was the best of the test and earns a Best Buy rating.

The civilian-available semi-auto versions of what began as expensive SBR's (short-barrel rifles) or true submachine guns are advertised as having good accuracy and reliability while offering a more compact package than a rifle and higher round counts than most handguns. For the task of guarding the castle, we've been around the block a time or two, and have suitable choices for nearly anyone — great pistols, rifles, and shotguns. For this test, we had to suspend any preconceived notions of what we might prefer for home defense and test these firearms based on their own merits. Those merits, we found, are few. If you are shooting for fun and simply making brass, anything that goes bang is suitable. We'll get into the reasons for these judgments, but we like to be clear up front. The SIG Sauer MPX-P is one expensive means of not accomplishing much. The Uzi Pro pistol has drawbacks that made shooting downright frustrating. The MasterPiece Arms Defender proved to be the best of the three and has merit in a defensive situation, within certain narrow parameters. We arrived at this decision by using personal-defense criteria as the overriding factor in providing Buy/Don't Buy advice to our loyal readers. So, in more detail, here are our reasons for making these assessments.



The three 9mm pistols we tested, the SIG Sauer MPX-P, top, the MasterPiece Arms Defender, middle, and the Uzi Mini Pro, bottom, have distinctively different characters. Two of the three pistols were reliable with all cartridges tested and gave good performance. We liked the MPA 9mm the best. Firing these handguns was a blast! Recoil wasn't a factor. The MPX-P is much larger than the other 9mm pistols. It is an even bet accuracy potential could be enhanced more with the SIG than the other handguns.

How We Tested

Our 9mm Luger ammunition for this test included a 158-grain lead round nose choice from Tomkatammo.com ($18/50 rounds). We also used Black Hills Ammunition 124-grain jacketed hollow points from VenturaMunitions.com ($14/20), a Black Hills Ammunition 115-grain EXP, an Extra Power load not quite in +P territory, also available from VenturaMunitions.com, ($17/20), and a SIG Sauer 115-grain full-metal-jacket load from Cabelas.com ($28/50). Others included the SIG Sauer 124-grain V Crown jacketed hollow point from Luckygunner.com ($16.75/20), and the Hornady American Gunner 124-grain XTP +P from MidwayUSA.com ($14.79/20). We used the Tomkat 158-grain, the Black Hills 124-grain JHP, and the SIG 115-grain FMJ load in benchrest accuracy testing.

IWI Mini Uzi Pro
UPP9S 9mm Luger, $999

This was a recent counter price for this product at Tombstonetactical.com. The firearm which inspired the Mini, the Uzi 9mm submachine gun, is a remarkable firearm in many ways. From the telescoping bolt to the superbly ergonomic design, the Uzi was among the most reliable and effective SMGs of the day. It was inevitable



This rater is grimacing because of the Uzi Pro's heavy trigger.

a civilian-legal semi-automatic would be marketed. Like all semi-automatic SMG-type pistols or carbines, the original, designed to ensure hits with a cyclic dispersion of ammunition, is reduced to firing one cartridge with every pull of the trigger. Compared to a carbine or pistol designed for accurate semi-automatic fire, such a converted SMG is problematic at best. We test each gun on its own merits, but comparison to the original cannot be avoided. The pistol tested is among the most recent of these.

Today, military units use short-barrel carbines and even civilians use SBR's when legal. A civilian-legal semi auto version of an SMG would have to have good points to be worth the price. The Uzi Pro pistol version may be used as a home-defense firearm, but we see it primarily as a collector's piece or for the recreational shooter. There is a significant difference in firing the Uzi Pro pistol and the carbine version of the Uzi SMG. The pistol illustrated is made in Israel and builds upon the Uzi name. While recognizable as a Uzi pistol, the example illustrated differs considerably from the original. The lower receiver is polymer. This receiver features a light rail. The grip itself is different from the original Uzi. The grip features finger grooves the raters found comfortable. The grip frame is smaller in circumference than the original Uzi SMG. A pistol is more difficult to handle with a fat grip than a carbine, and this modification was welcome. The magazine release has been changed. The old release was a military-style catch at the bottom of the hand grip. You may still simply bring the hands together to load the

IWI MINI UZI PRO UPP9S 9MM LUGER, $999

GUN TESTS GRADE: C

The Uzi is a comparative rarity, a pistol that is well made of good material and with good engineering, but which is not something we would wish to own or use.



Action	Gas Piston Semi-Auto
Overall Length	9.5 in.
Overall Height	7.1 in.
Maximum Width	2.5 in.
Weight Unloaded (w/o Mag)	56 oz.
Weight Loaded	66 oz.

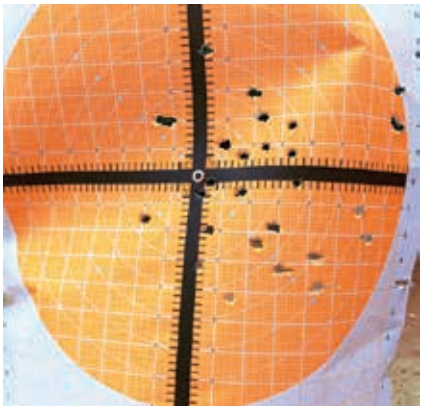
Barrel	4.5 in., Steel
Magazines	20, 25 Rounds
Slide	Steel
Frame	Polymer
Frame Front Strap Height	3.5 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	2.5 in.
Grips	NA
Grip Thickness (max)	1.25 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.25 in.
Sights	Steel
Trigger Pull Weight	14.0 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.7 in.
Safeties	Manual and Grip
Warranty	5 Years
Made In	Israel
Website	IWIus.com



The front sight is a well-protected service-grade post. The wings would protect the sight if the gun were dropped.



We did not like the new safety location, but our shooters acclimated to it. Its location caused a grip change for some.



The Uzi was the least accurate pistol tested in this trio.



The sights are service grade, but other factors, including a heavy trigger, hurt accuracy more.

magazine into the pistol. The modern Browning-style magazine release works fine.

The grip is quite ergonomic. The original safety was behind and above the trigger on the hand grip. The Uzi Pro has moved the safety to the receiver. The new safety is less ergonomic than the earlier design and requires more movement to operate. To press the safety forward for Fire or back for Safe requires breaking the firing grip. The safety was also stiff. The safety may be applied with the bolt cocked or not. After some effort and practice, we were able to use the safety quickly enough as we moved the Uzi Pro into the firing position. We admit the slimmed grip, made possible with polymer, may have made it difficult to retain a safety in the firing grip. The grip safety has been retained, which we like. The cocking handle has been moved from the top of the receiver to the side of the receiver. This is an improvement, we feel, especially if optics are mounted. The cocking lever does not reciprocate with the bolt. The new cocking lever location allows a light rail to be added to the top of the receiver. The steel sights are protected by wings in the military fashion. The sights offer a white-dot arrangement. The rear sight is adjustable for windage. The front sight may be adjusted in AR-15 style.

The steel magazines were well made and seemed rugged. The Uzi Pro magazines are true double-column magazines. A cartridge is pressed into the magazine either to the left or the right and the magazine is loaded to full capacity. The pistol is supplied with a 20-round and a 25-round magazine. Based on our experience, these magazines are among the best designed and rugged magazines supplied with any firearm of the type.

The Uzi Pro is a blowback pistol. The weight is a solid 59 ounces. While recoil isn't a concern, the pistol was heavy to handle. The trigger action was heavier than expected. It was off the scale for our measuring device, but was estimated at 14 pounds.

MASTERPIECE ARMS DEFENDER PISTOL MPA30DMG 9MM LUGER, $680

GUN TESTS GRADE: A- (BEST BUY)

The Defender pistol was an enjoyable firearm to use and handle. It offered good practical accuracy, reliability with a range of ammunition and aftermarket magazines, and the trigger action was excellent. There was little to fault the MPA, if you solely look at what it is. But we didn't like the safety.



Action	Blowback Semi-Auto
Overall Length	11.8 in.
Overall Height	6.25 in.
Maximum width	2.5 in.
Weight Unloaded	66 oz.
Weight Loaded	73 oz.
Barrel Length	5.5 in.
Barrel	Steel
Magazine	17 Rds.
Slide	Steel
Frame	Steel
Frame Front Strap Height	3.5 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	2.5 in.
Grip thickness (max)	1.25 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	6.2 in.
Sights	Steel
Trigger Pull Weight	5.5 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.6 in.
Safety	Manual
Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Website	MasterPieceArms.com
Telephone	(706) 395-7050
Made In	USA

We had several practice rounds before finding out how to properly bench-rest these pistols. It took some settling, but we found solid holds.





The MPA could be managed with one hand. The pistol weighs 66 ounces, or 7 ounces more than the Uzi Pro. In our estimation, the MPA has better balance than the Israeli product and the MPA pistol is livelier in the hand.

This is a 15-yard group with the MPA 9mm. The front-post sight and U-notch rear sight are precise when properly lined up. We think the MPA is most likely to be used by recreational shooters, who would also like the trigger, which broke cleanly at 5.5 pounds. This trigger has survived more than 300 rounds without any trouble.



There was considerable movement as the striker fell. We attempted a number of dry-fire sessions before firing. The trigger did not give us confidence in the ability to fire the piece accurately. During the familiarization phase, some raters noted that their experience indicated the Uzi might not be reliable with JHP loads, so we included those. While we used standard loads for accuracy testing, initial firing was accomplished with a magazine each of six loads, using the 20-round magazine, for 120 cartridges. The first was a loading especially designed for suppressed 9mm handguns. With the popularity of suppressors, we felt the pistols should run with this load.

Fired off hand, the Uzi Pro handled the initial six magazines without any type of malfunction. The Uzi's front sight just seemed to hang on the target with these loads. Even with the Hornady +P load, the pistol was mild in recoil, but the impulse was noticeably heavier. However, the grouping during the combat firing drills was not impressive. The pistol was held in two hands and the front sight placed on the X ring. The balance of the pistol and the heavy trigger played against us. We also had to keep pressure on the grip safety during firing. We would have preferred larger sights for combat shooting, as the precision nature of the sights was wasted with this handgun. Half of the raters involved found that during recoil, they sometimes recovered and aimed with the protective wing rather than the front sight. This resulted in a wide miss. In short, the pistol was considerably inferior to a Glock 17 9mm or Browning Hi-Power 9mm in combat shooting, as just two examples. When firing from the bench rest, we were able to rest the pistol against a range bag with the 20-round magazine in place and carefully fire at 25 yards. As far as getting a solid firing position, the Uzi presented little difficulty. The 14-pound+ trigger and heavy striker fall were each impediments to accuracy. Best results were with the Tomkat 158-grain load. The pistol may have intrinsic accuracy, but practical accuracy is limited.

RANGE DATA

Black Hills Ammunition 124-grain JHP	**UZI Pro**	**MPA Defender**	**SIG Sauer MPX-P**
Average Velocity	1080 fps	1107 fps	1090 fps
Muzzle Energy	321 ft.-lbs.	337 ft.-lbs.	327 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	6.7 in.	3.5 in.	2.3 in.
Largest Group	9.0 in.	4.0 in.	3.0 in.
Average Group Size	7.9 in.	3.8 in.	2.6 in.
SIG Sauer Elite 115-grain FMJ	**UZI Pro**	**MPA Defender**	**SIG Sauer MPX-P**
Average Velocity	1190 fps	1222 fps	1234 fps
Muzzle Energy	361 ft.-lbs.	381 ft.-lbs.	388 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	7.9 in.	3.3 in.	2.0 in.
Largest Group	9.7 in.	4.5 in.	3.0 in.
Average Group Size	8.2 in.	3.9 in.	2.5 in.
Tomkat 158-grain RNL	**UZI Pro**	**MPA Defender**	**SIG Sauer MPX-P**
Average Velocity	823 fps	855 fps	812 fps
Muzzle Energy	237 ft.-lbs.	256 ft.-lbs.	231 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	6.5 in.	3.0 in.	3.3 in.
Largest Group	9.5 in.	3.6 in.	4.5 in.
Average Group Size	8.3 in.	3.3 in.	3.9 in.

To collect accuracy data, we fired five-shot groups off a solid bench rest. Distance: 25 yards. We recorded velocity with a Shooting Chrony Master Chronograph. The first sky screen was set 10 feet from the muzzle.

Ammo sources: Black Hills Ammunition 124-grain JHP (VenturaMunitions.com $14.01/20); SIG Sauer Elite 115-grain FMJ (Cabelas.com, $28/50); Tomkat 158-grain RNL (Tomakatammo.com $18/50).

Our Team Said: We feel the Uzi pistol suffers in downsizing from SMG configuration. It is an Uzi, however, and is the real thing made in Israel. The Uzi Pro is reliable with a range of ammunition. Handling and ergonomics are improved over the original Uzi pistol and the Pro, while heavy, is lighter than previous Uzi pistols due to use of a polymer frame. We did not like the safety position compared to the original, but after some acclimation, we gave it a pass. It is superior to the MPA safety. The sights are good, perhaps too good, for this pistol. A larger set for close-range fire would be better. The magazines are very sturdy and were the best tested.

The heavy trigger was a demerit. We rated the pistol down because of its poor accuracy, heavy trigger, and high cost.

MasterPiece Arms Defender Pistol MPA30DMG 9mm Luger, $680

This was the list price at MasterPieceArms.com. The MPA is another blowback semi-auto version of a popular SMG. This pistol is a close, but not exact, copy of the MAC 10 SMG and variants. The Ingram-designed SMGs and pistols have survived in various forms for decades. Execution has ranged from poor to very good. Since they were originally designed to be as compact as possible, it wasn't as big a leap creating a MAC 10 pistol as it was to create a Uzi pistol. The MasterPiece Arms pistol rates very good for execution. In general layout, the pistol is similar to the Uzi. The MPA pistol's lower receiver light rail



All three magazines tested with the MPA — Glock, Magpul, and KHAN — worked well.

is a bit short, but the all-steel pistol looks good with a nice, even finish. The upper rail is more spacious. The sights are well protected.

With the weight of these handguns, a dropped firearm would flatten the sights. The pistol weighs 66 ounces, 7 ounces more than the Uzi Pro. The balance, however, is better, and the MPA pistol is livelier in the hand. The front-post sight and U-notch rear sight are precise when properly lined up. The bolt is easily manipulated. The safety location, on the right side of the receiver, is less handy than the Uzi. This safety is definitely a two-hand job, with one hand holding the pistol and the other manipulating the safety. One of the raters pointed out that since the Uzi and MPA are most likely to be used as recreational shooters, the best means of keeping the pistol at ready is with the chamber empty.

The grip features finger grooves and skateboard tape for adhesion and abrasion. The thin trigger proved comfortable to use, breaking at 5.5



The MPA safety lever isn't the most ergonomic we have tested.

pounds and with a clean, distinct feel that our shooters liked. We supposed that a lighter trigger would not survive well with the heavy bolt coming violently to rest with every pull of the trigger in a SMG , and the Uzi showed this heritage. The heavy trigger prevented runaway firing. The heavy trigger isn't necessary with a semi-auto pistol, but it does require re-engineering. The MPA profits from this re-engineering. This trigger has survived more than 300 rounds without any trouble.

The pistol is supplied with a fake suppressor, which we used to hold for stability when firing the MPA pistol from below eye level. The barrel is threaded for a suppressor, which would be an advantage over the Uzi. We fired the MPA pistol with and without the fake suppressor. Holding the MPA with two hands and firing quickly, the pistol was a joy to use, offering excellent control and moving quickly in the hands.

The MPA 9mm accepts Glock 17 magazines. The pistol was supplied with a single Khan magazine. We added MagPul magazines and Glock types as well. The pistol never malfunctioned, and each magazine locked in place and functioned well. We fired the same 120-round qualification with the MPA, although it was a bit more difficult with 17-round magazines. (A Glock 33-round magazine would have been ideal.) There were no malfunctions.



Holding the MPA with two hands and firing quickly, the pistol was a joy to use. We fired the MPA pistol with and without the faux suppressor.

Although the MPA is heavier than the Uzi Pro, the balance is superior and the pistol is easier to fire and hold. The 5.5-inch barrel also gave a velocity advantage over the Uzi. As an example, the Black Hills Ammunition 124-grain JHP clocked 1080 fps from the Uzi and 1107 fps from the MPA. The 5.5-inch barrel of the MPA gave higher velocity than the average 5-inch barrel 9mm pistol, with the Black Hills Ammunition 115-grain EXP clocking 1284 fps versus 1220 fps in the Uzi and 1190 fps in a 5-inch-barrel Browning Hi-Power. Since there were no malfunctions with +P loads and no overpressure signs, all three of the pistols tested are good to go with +P loads.

At the bench, we settled into a firing position and put three loads through the MPA pistol for accuracy. The Tomkat 158-grain load was mild and accurate. The largest groups were smaller than the smallest group fired with the Uzi.

Our Team Said: The MPA pistol outperformed the Uzi considerably in handling and accuracy. It is also less expensive. The pistol handles well enough to have utility as a home-defense piece. With a red-dot scope, it just might move from a home defense role into area defense. We rated it down a half grade based on the safety location. The MPA is supplied with a threaded barrel and a fake suppressor, which is valuable. It is the least expensive pistol tested, but the Best Buy.

SIG Sauer MPX-P 9mm Luger, $1700

This pistol is in a different class than the others, but it's not an unfair match up, as each of the three might be used for recreational shooting and home defense. The SIG MPX-P isn't based on a submachine gun build, but instead on the AR-15 rifle. As such, the handling and operation of the MPX-P will be familiar to most shooters. The design itself is highly modified, but the standard operating procedure is the same as the AR-15. The pistol is similar to a short AR-15 in appearance. The MPX-P features a standard AR-15 cocking handle, AR-15/type safety, magazine latch, and bolt release. If you use an AR-15 rifle, it will be second nature to operate the MPX-P. The MPX-P is

heavy for a pistol at 5.2 pounds, but it balanced well.

While we did not run down a comparison, there are certain parts, such as the trigger group, of the MPX-P that will interchange with the AR-15 rifle. This isn't a converted AR-15, however, as the converted 9mm AR sometimes isn't ideal. The MPX-P is a new design intended to compete in the market once dominated by the HK MP5. The MPX-P features a full-length rail that is longer than either of the SMG-based designs. It is no problem to mount a red-dot scope on it. The MPX-P is supplied with a fold-down aperture sight and front sight. These sights offer good adjustment and a good sight picture. The forend attachment system is a SIG design. The bolt and bolt carrier are like that of an AR-15, but geared to the 9mm Luger cartridge. The MPX-P recoil spring is housed in the upper receiver, an important difference between this rifle and the AR-15. Rather than the blowback design of the other 9mm pistols, the MPX-P uses a short-stroke piston gas system.

Also, the MPX-P features a quick-change barrel system that will have more relevance for those who wish to change the pistol to a 357 SIG or 40 S&W and retain the easy-shooting 9mm for practice. At present, these kits are not available. Do not count this as an advantage until the kits are actually offered for sale.

The magazines are plastic. There is only one supplied with the gun, and spares are expensive, at approximately $60. SIG tells us the barrel



The SIG is the only pistol that malfunctioned.

SIG SAUER MPX-P 9MM LUGER, $1700

GUN TESTS GRADE: B

The SIG MPX-P is the heaviest and most expensive of the three pistols tested. It is also the only pistol to suffer a malfunction, albeit with specialized subsonic ammunition. It would be very difficult to fit a suppressor on the MPX-P, and the action isn't as likely to accommodate subsonic ammunition, an important consideration with modern shooters.



Action	Closed, Fully Locked Short-Stroke, Pushrod Gas System
Overall Length	16.85 in.
Overall Height	11.0 in.
Maximum Width	2.0 in.
Weight Unloaded	4.8 lbs.
Weight Loaded	5.6 lbs.
Slide	Aluminum
Barrel	Steel; 8.0 in., 1:10 Twist, 13.5x1 LH Threads
Magazine	Lancer Polymer 10/20/30 30-Rd. AR-Style
Frame	Aluminum
Frame Front Strap Height	3.0 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	4.5 in.
Grips	N/A
Grip Thickness (max)	1.25 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.5 in.
Sights	Steel
Trigger Pull Weight	7.0 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.5 in.
Safety	Ambidextrous
Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Telephone	(603) 610-3000
Website	SIGSauer.com
Made In	USA



We did not like the plastic magazine, but it certainly functioned properly.



The MPX-P's controls are ambidextrous and ergonomic, and easy to learn, testers said.



This is a group from 15 yards, off hand, with the MPX-P 9mm.



During dry fire (the rater's wife does not allow firing in the home), the pistols were sometimes difficult to brace properly for accurate fire.



Fired from below eye level, the MPX-P gave good results. Addressing targets with both hands on the SIG Sauer made best use of its size and length. Oddly, we didn't see big velocity gains with it.

uses a non-standard thread that isn't compatible with most muzzle brakes and suppressors. Reason: Our SIG expert tells us engineers were concerned that someone would fit a 5.56mm muzzle brake to the MPX-P. The supplied muzzle brake works well enough.

When cocking the pistol AR-15/ style with the cocking handle, it may be a bit slower and more awkward than the MPA; however, the safety location is leagues ahead of the other two pistols.

We were able to test the 120 rounds of ammunition in the same manner as with the other pistols, but we loaded the magazine to a full 30 rounds, simply noting how the magazine was loaded and with which loading. The magazine is a double-column design, and it is loaded in the same manner as the as the Uzi magazine. The plastic



In one drill, a rater quickly exited a vehicle and addressed targets with the SIG MPX-P 9mm. It performed well, our testers said.

magazine did not give the raters the same confidence as the stout metal magazine of the Uzi or the proven Glock magazine of the MPA, but it worked well enough.

In combat shooting the SIG did well, but the trigger was heavier than expected at almost 9 pounds. The 8-inch barrel and long forend afforded excellent control. Control was similar to the MPA when the MPA was fitted with the fake suppressor. The shorter gun might handle faster in a vehicle or in the home, but the MPX-P handled quickly. The long barrel gave better accuracy and control when fired below eye level. Combat groups were good. The 8-inch barrel did not exhibit the velocity advantage we thought we would see. As an example, the Black Hills Ammunition 124-grain JHP clocked 1080 fps in the Uzi, 1107 fps in the MPA, and 1090 fps in the MPX-P. Other loads had a similar correlation.

The MPX-P was the only pistol to malfunction during the test. The load was the Tomkat 158-grain 9mm. This load has functioned in other 9mm handguns, and most important, in the other semi-auto pistols tested. During this malfunction, the MPX-P fired once and then short cycled. While this is a specialty load for subsonic use with a suppressor, it functioned in the other handguns.

We hand-cycled the 158-grain cartridges used in the accuracy test, which probably resulted in a worse showing than would be expected.



We conducted a few dry-fire handling exercises inside the home. We prefer a smaller semi-auto pistol, but below eye level, the big 9mms have some merit.

Resting the forward portion of the pistol on the benchrest with the magazine extending below the table and offsetting our chair resulted in a rock-solid firing position. The SIG 115-grain FMJ load gave a solid 2.0-inch group to become the most accurate load tested in the MPX-P and the best showing of the test.

A problem that isn't easily addressed is the sight offset. The sights are AR-15 types and this means they set high above the bore. The MPX-P fired low at close range, such as 7 yards, which means that this would have to be accounted for in a hostage rescue drill. At 25 yards, the SIG fired only slightly low.

Our Team Said: The MPX-P is heavy for a pistol at 5.2 pounds, but it balanced well and is pricey, which isn't bad if you have sterling performance. The pistol had good accuracy, but not more than a match-grade conventional handgun. The pistol is controllable and comfortable in rapid fire. However, the MPA with the fake suppressor used as a hand rest gave similar rapid-fire groups at close range. The MPX-P is heavy for a pistol at 5.2 pounds, but it balanced well. It was reliable with FMJ and JHP loads, but not low-impulse loads. The magazine we did not like functioned perfectly, so we cannot complain.

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

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SHORT SHOTS

Help With Buying a Silencer

SilencerCo's SuppressEd EasyGuide is a convenient information packet to help you navigate the silencer-buying process after the implementation of BATF's new 41F rule.

The EasyGuide helps customers understand the benefits of buying as an individual or NFA trust, provides a checklist of all forms due to the BATFE and CLEO, offers examples of how each form should be completed, and includes blank forms and envelopes to send all your forms once completed.



Dealers have begun receiving their shipments of packets, so be sure to request one next time you're at your local shop. Or you can visit store.SilencerCo.com to order your packet today. They're free, but there's a $5 shipping and handling charge.

COMING UP IN GUN TESTS

● 357 Magnum Personal Defense Loads: When it comes to the 357 Magnum cartridge, the consensus is the round is a great performer. However, the rub is that its exploits were often made with larger revolvers, usually with barrels of at least 6 inches. When it comes to personal defense, most folks are going to carry a 2-, 3- or 4-inch-barrel revolver. So, for those shooters who prefer the wheelgun, the Magnum needs to work in a shorter barrel. But does it? Tested: Cor-Bon 100-grain PowRBall, Winchester 110-grain JHP Q4204, Winchester Silvertip 145-grain X357SHP, Cor-Bon 110-grain JHP, Federal 130-grain Hydra Shock 357H52PDH, Black Hills 125-grain JHP D357N2, Hornady 125-grain FTX Critical Defense, Hornady 140-grain FTX, Buffalo Bore 125-grain Tactical, and Buffalo Bore 140-grain Tactical.

● IWB Holsters: Barber Leather Works Snaps and Straps, Barber Leather Works Chameleon, Stealth Gear Onyx, Discrete Defense Solutions IWB, Hidden Hybrid Holsters HHS S1, KT-Mech.com Gunfighter IWB, Alien Gear Cloak IWB, Gold Star Holsters IWB, Mernickle Holsters PS 2, The Master's Holster reversible IWB, Tagua 4 in 1 holster, Blackhawk! Tuckable, and more.

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