GUN TESTS®

THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

$5.95 February 2017/Vol. MMXVII, No. 2

REPRODUCTION M1 CARBINES

Do these current-manufacture M1 Carbines from Auto-Ordnance and Inland Mfg. perform like Uncle Sam intended? We think so. **— Page 6**





AFFORDABLE HOME-DEFENSE REVOLVERS

We tested four double-action revolvers and found that all had appeal, but some made more sense than others — in particular, we think the S&W Military and Police is a working classic. **● Page 13**

















BOLT-ACTION RIFLES

We tested a quartet of mid-range chambered hunting rifles and found a super bargain among them. Tested: Thompson Center's Compass and Browning's X-Bolt Micro Midas in 22-250 Rem., CZ USA's Model 557 Sporter Short Action in 243 Win., and Legacy Sports International's Howa Mini Action Rifle in 6.5 Grendel. **● Page 21**

DOWNRANGE: 2 ● FIRING LINE: 3 ● VALUE GUIDES: 12, 20 ● 357 MAGNUM AMMO TEST: 29 ● COMING UP: 32

DOWNRANGE

WATCH OUT FOR NEW FORM 4473



Todd Woodard

Because several states have approved marijuana for medicinal or recreational use, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives has decided to tweak its Form 4473 to address the issue. Form 4473 is the form that must be filled out when a person purchases a firearm from a Federal Firearms License (FFL) holder (such as a gun shop). Beginning January 16, 2017, all purchasers must complete the new, revised form. After that date, any older version of the form will be rejected.

One of the revisions to the form concerns Question 11.e., regarding the use of marijuana and other drugs. The federal government still outlaws marijuana as a Schedule I controlled substance and, therefore, the new form contains a warning that reads as follows:

11.e. Are you an unlawful user of, or addicted to, marijuana or any depressant, stimulant, narcotic drug or any other controlled substance? WARNING: The use or possession of marijuana remains unlawful under Federal law regardless of whether it has been legalized or decriminalized for medicinal or recreational purposes in the state where you reside.

So, if you answer "Yes" to Question 11.e., you will be prohibited from buying a firearm from a licensed dealer. And making a false statement on the form is a felony.

The ATF could receive access to the information in a medical marijuana user database with nothing more than a subpoena, as happened in Oregon when federal agents were able to obtain the records of dozens of medical marijuana users. Under current regulations, law enforcement can't access the entire medical marijuana registry to cross reference it with gun registries and concealed handgun permits, but agencies do have the ability to search on a case-by-case basis to see who may or may not have concealed handgun licenses or permits in the state.

U.S. Law Shield of Colorado Independent Program Attorney Doug Richards said, "While the state marijuana laws in Colorado have changed, the Federal laws have not and still list marijuana as a controlled substance. Therefore, marijuana is still banned under federal law.

"The effect of this federal prohibition extends beyond whether you can lawfully possess marijuana, but to many other aspects of our lives. The changes to ATF Form 4473 question 11(e), for example, reflect the current conflict between state and federal law, and leave firearms owners in an uncomfortable position."

If you use marijuana medically, what should you do if confronted with this question when purchasing a gun?

"The only clear answer I can provide is that you should never lie on question 11(e)," Richards said. "When I was a federal prosecutor, I used false answers on this form as a basis for criminal charges. The consequences for providing false information are significant."

This is a worrisome prospect, going far beyond smoking pot. I don't like that the government can just roll back medical-privacy laws. **GT**

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GUN TESTS ACCEPTS NO COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING

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

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Revenue Canada GST Account #128044658.

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

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

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Glossy Paper Gets Thumbs-Ups

With the January 2017 issue, we switched to glossy paper that improves image quality. Readers Scott, Tom, and others like the change. Also, votes are in for Trump's gun-legislation agenda.

Re Glossy Paper

Your publication is always the first one I pick up when the mail arrives. Great tests on great guns. I especially wanted to thank you for upgrading the paper you are now using. Easier to read, and it appears it will be more durable. Yours is also the only publication I keep long term. Regards. **— Scott W.**

I just received my January 2017, No. 1 issue of Gun Tests. Just wanted to comment on the new, and improved, format. The finish and appearance adds a lot to an otherwise excellent publication, which I always enjoy. Thank you. **— Tom**

Re "Downrange," January 2017

First off, I like the glossy paper! Your Downrange comments are spot on. Used 9mm pistols, exactly so. I've still not found a Taurus pistol worth keeping, and that's a good number I've tried/owned. I bought a Remington 870 20-gauge pump, youth model, years ago for home defense — almost the same gun as the Mossberg you just rated. It stood next to the bed for many years, until I decided it wasn't getting used enough, and "converted" it into a night-shooting jack-rabbit harvester a few years back. The short length makes it a great truck gun, quick to get on target, and the light recoil makes it ideal for the long nights of keeping the alfalfa fields safe. Love your publication, keep up the great work! **— Marc**

Dear Mr. Woodard: First, let me compliment you on the continued publication of your fine magazine! Just read your editorial concerning the presidential election. I don't know how many people understand how clear the correlation between Ms. Clinton's vehement anti-2A views and her loss of what should have been a slam-dunk win.

If the numbers are remotely correct, there are 80 million gun owners in America. This number presumes that most of those folks are adults and not felons; therefore, they were potential voters. Another stat says that roughly 1 out of 20 Americans have a concealed-carry permit.

To call all those folks evil, and to threaten their lifestyle, was a mistake Al Gore made in 2000, and cost him the election. President Obama learned that, and toned down the anti-gun rhetoric for his two campaigns. It worked for Mr. Obama, and he won. Ms. Clinton completely misread history and went off the deep end with her comments and proposals. She already had the left, was hoping for the middle, and courted the moderate right. One wonders how any campaign planning went on to decide to alienate a huge group with no votes to gain? Even Bernie Sanders called her out on some of her proposals, such as her idea to prosecute gun makers for illegal use of legally produced firearms. Ah well.

— Armen

Todd: Great question on which gun legislation I'd like to see. I vote for Fast and Furious, just to see how many in the "gumment" can be prosecuted, up to and including Eric Holder. Then judges to uphold Heller and McDonald, followed

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.

closely by National Right to Carry, military personnel having the right to carry at recruitment stations (I would add while on base also), and, finally, silencers. I am so hard of hearing, gunshot sounds do not bother me any more, but younger ones should not have the impediment of not being able to have them. I like the new cover, and as always, your insightful and superb analysis of our 2A rights. God bless our Constitution and GUN TESTS. **— Jim**

In your editorial you correctly state, "The Pentagon has already rolled back regulations preventing soldier carry." That, however, is not the full story. The soldier is still subject to the state law allowing or not allowing concealed/open carry. As such, in the nanny state of New Jersey and other similar states, soldiers would not be allowed to do so, as permits are not issued. Our lawmakers wish to leave these soldiers and the law-abiding citizens defenseless. However, this seems to only apply to us common-folk. It appears that many politicians are more concerned about depriving good citizens their rights rather than correctly punishing the criminals. We need President Trump to right these wrongs with Federal legislation, including a National Right to Carry. Thank you. **— Clint**

Re "Mil-Spec .30-'06 Bolt Guns: '03 Springfield Vs. '17 Enfield," September 2004

I wanted to pass along to my fellow GUN TESTS readers a little information about the Enfield.

Generally regarded as the best battle rifle of World War I, 2017 will mark the centenary of the 1917 Enfield rifle. As mint examples of this rife have become increasingly scarce, they have soared in value, reaching in excess of $2,000. So there would appear to a opportunity for Remington, who presumably still has the engineering drawings for the 1917 on file, to profit from producing a run of authentic 1917 Enfields for the collector and shooter.



With their internal metal injection molding capability and available investment casting sources, Remington should be able to rapidly and economically tool up for producing this rifle. It should be made exactly as the original was, including the clip guides, as it will likely be used in vintage military rifle competitions, which have become popular across the country.

The vast majority of rifles are shot at the shooting range, not the hunting field. The 1917 excels as a range rifle by virtue of having a hand guard to protect the shooter's hand from the hot barrel and a rear sight which is readily adjustable for elevation at predetermined ranges. And at the end of the day, there is only a barrel to clean instead of a complex mechanism with self-loading rifles. No other military-style bolt action rifles are being produced today, so if Remington were to do so, they would have the market entirely to themselves.

With the election of Trump to the presidency, the pressure is off for stocking up on the best self-defense rifles, so now gun buyers will be turning their attention to buying rifles which are fun to shoot at the range and easy to maintain, like the 1917 Enfield. **— Mike**

E-Book Question

On the last page of the GUN TESTS E-Book, *The 'A' Team: Concealable 9mm Handguns & Gear*, there is a statement that reads, "Contact links for this story have been loaded onto the Gun-Tests.com web page." I can't find the links, could you please help me? **— Peter**

Hey Peter: Sorry about that. Following is a list of the webpages where you can get more information on products listed in the August 2013 GUN TESTS *article, "Inside-The-Waistband Holsters: Kydex, Leather and Hybrid Styles," which also appeared in the 9mm E-book. — tw*

Hopp Custom Leather Holsters IWB
Facebook.com/HoppCustomLeathers
ebhleather@gmail.com

JM Custom Kydex IWB Holster Version 2 IWB2
JMCustomkydex.com/p/IWB2.html

eXo Concealment Products IWB/OWB holster
exoConcealmentProducts.com

DC Holsters Hybrid
DCHolsters.com

SwapRig Holsters MiniSwap IWB and SwapRig Holsters Revolution
SwapRigHolsters.com

Old Faithful Holsters Assembled Inside the Waistband Hip Gun Holster
OldFaithfulHolsters.com

Re "Budget 20-Gauge Shoot Off: H&R, Century, and Mossberg," January 2017

Back in the late 1970s, I bought a Mossberg 500 in 20 gauge with an 18-inch barrel and pistol grip for home defense, for the same reasons you stated: lower recoil for my wife and



young daughter should the goblins attack. I used the heck out of it, and recently had it repaired, and it suffered from a very rusty barrel in the past. Now, it's still ugly, but also still works reliably. Still about perfect for home defense. Also, I've fired both barrels of a 12-gauge double simultaneously, and I agree, it is not for the faint of heart. Keep up the great work; I'm a long-time subscriber. **— Mark**

Re "The 44 Special: An Old Number Is Revitalized by Modern Loads," January 2017

Dear Editor Woodard: Time flies



when you are having fun, or carrying a gun. I just finished reading your January 2017 test and comparison of 44 Special ammo. The performance of the Hornady Critical Defense and Custom ammunition in the 3-inch Bulldog was very informative and prompted this enquiry.

I am 68 years old and have possessed carry permits from various states for fifty years. For longer than I can remember, I have carried 2.5- to 3-inch-barreled 357 Magnum revolvers loaded with the Remington 125-grain scallop jacket hollowpoint load, which decades ago was touted as having 96% one-shot-stop performance, thus making it the *ne plus ultra* carry load of the day. Although I have gone to Hornady Critical Defense and American Gunner for 38 Special and 9mm Luger, I have stuck with the old Remington load for 357 Magnum, partly because I have a good supply sufficient for carrying and practice.

However, I am curious if the modern Hornady 357s with the FTX and XTP bullets are superior in performance to my old, probably not still in production, Remington scallop jackets? You may have a ready answer, or you may consider doing a test to see how the modern ammunition from Hornady, SIG, Speer, and even Remington, stacks up against my vintage carry ammo.

— William

Hey William: I don't have a ready answer, but I do have a test of 357 Magnum ammunition on page 29. Perhaps it can tell us at least part of the story. Also, maybe we can root around and find enough of your load to test and see how it does. I'll inquire with Mr. Campbell to see if he can begin a search. — tw

I was disappointed and perplexed that you would test one Buffalo Bore load and omit the Buffalo Bore load that was designed specifically for the Charter Arms 44 Bulldog, a load with its possible "shot out of timing" problem in mind.

I refer to Buffalo Bore's Anti-Personnel 44 Special Hardcast Wadcutter 200-grain load. Very accurate and controllable from both 3-inch and 2.5-inch barrels. Very hard hitting. The only negative is that because of the shape of the wadcutter, it takes more practice to reload quickly with a speedloader. While the Hornady FTX ammo is excellent, Charter Arms are fixed-sight revolvers that seem to be sighted for 200-grain bullets. My experience with



the 165-grain FTX is that, in a Bulldog, it does not shoot to point of aim. My other favorite choice would be a load that Winchester still catalogs but apparently no longer makes, the 200-grain Silvertip Hollowpoint.

— Ed

Hey Ed: We can see why you're fond of BB's Anti-Personnel round. We only have a finite amount of time, so we've got to cut off the ammo choices somewhere. Buffalo Bore says the Anti-Personnel load was developed to be used in all 44 Special firearms, including Charter Arms. "Our other heavy 44 Special loads exclude the Charter Arms as suitable for use with them," the company website says. — tw

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There are two ways to find guns we've reviewed. The Compare Guns feature (top left corner of the page under the logo) allows you to input several descriptors and narrow the search results. Or you can use the Search function. If you search for a common item, such as "22 LR," you'll get tons of references. Basically, the search function finds every instance of the searched-for topic and lists the accompanying articles the topic appeared in. The more specific and unique the reference, the better the search. We do our best to list the catalog numbers for guns we've tested, so that's usually a good place to start. There's also an "Advanced Search" area to help you narrow the results.

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**

Reproduction M1 Carbines: We Test A-O and Inland Mfg. Models

Do these U.S.-made M1 Carbine knockoffs perform like Uncle Sam intended? Yes, sir, they do. If you don't want the real thing for historical or personal reasons, these two shooters work fine.

The M1 Carbine was adopted during World War II, then proceeded to arm our soldiers during the Korean War and Vietnam War, making it one of the most widely produced of all U.S. Military rifles. Millions were produced, and at one time, surplus models were quite common and inexpensive. Try finding a vintage M1 Carbine today, and you will pay close to $1000 for a well-used specimen. Costs, however, will vary dramatically depending on which manufacturer produced the M1 Carbine, the model, features, and condition.

Avid M1 Carbine collectors know that Winchester finalized the design of the M1 Carbine and produced the rifle, but other manufacturers like Inland Mfg. Division of General Motors Corp., Underwood (a typewriter manufacturer), IBM (when they made adding machines), Rock-Ola (a jukebox manufacturer), and others all received government contracts to produce the Carbine. Eleven manufacturers in total produced the M1 Carbine for the U.S. Military. Numerous commercial copies were produced after WWII. These commercial copies cost less, but their quality varies depending on the manufacturer, and some are not true reproductions of the M1 Carbine; rather, they are more of each manufacturer's "interpretation" of the M1 Carbine. Some are even chambered in 22 L.R., such as the Ruger 10/22 M1 and 9mm Luger, such as the Chiappa M1-9, respectively. They sort of look like an M1 Carbine but use a different operating mechanism. A true M1 Carbine is chambered in 30 Carbine and uses a gas-operated, short-stroke piston mechanism with a rotating bolt.

We opted to test two new M1 Carbine reproductions, the M1 1945 Carbine from Inland Mfg. (not the original Inland Mfg. but a new company) and the M1 Carbine Paratrooper from Auto-Ordnance (A-O). We found on three websites (Brownells.com, CheaperThanDirt.com and BudsGunShop.com) that the Inland's cost ranged from $999 to $992 and the A-O from $828 to $752. Both of these are built like Uncle Sam intended using a gas-operated, short-stroke piston system with a rotating bolt, and they are chambered in 30 Carbine.



Notice the Auto-Ordnance M1 (left) has a flattened bolt top, while the Inland (right) has a round bolt.







Top: The Auto-Ordnance M1 Carbine Paratrooper ($941) is a copy of the Model M1A1 with a folding wire stock. Middle and bottom: The Inland Mfg. M1 1945 Carbine ($1079) is more period correct. The Inland is a copy of the last style of Carbine that the original Inland company manufactured in 1945. In our opinion, these reproductions offer a lot for collectors, competitive shooters, and home defenders.

We looked at these two Carbines for historical accuracy, for competition use in M1 Carbine Matches, and as a home-defense choice. In our opinion, the Inland is suitable for all three, where the A-O is not competition ready, but it satisfies the other two roles pretty well. Bottom line, our test team found these two carbines to be reliable, depending on the ammunition employed, offer good performance if the cartridge is used within its limits, and unlike some other M1 Carbines our testers have fired in the past, these two reproductions are accurate enough for nearly any use.

How We Tested

Since the Carbine is a mid-20th century design, there are a few features that might seem dated to the modern shooter, because they are. The crossbolt safeties were located outside the trigger guard, which is common on many shotguns and rimfire rifles, but less true for centerfire rifles. The magazine-release button, which is larger, sits just forward of the safety button. Initially, testers new to the Carbine had to pay attention so they did not press the wrong button, but they soon learned and could determine by touch which button was which. Not a ding on either the Inland or A-O, just a feature of the M1 Carbine design worth noting.

Another feature of the design requires the magazines to be loaded fairly straight into the magazine well. Today's modern rifles typically have a flared magazine well that funnels the magazine home and offers the shooter a bit of wiggle room when inserting a magazine. Those testers with AR-15 experience found it took slightly more effort to insert and seat the magazine. Once the rifles were loaded, some testers ran the Carbines like an AK, racking the operating handle from under the rifle with their support hand and grasping the stock

30 CARBINE RANGE DATA

IWI 30 Carbine 110-gr. SP	**Inland Mfg. M1 1945 Carbine**	**Auto-Ordnance M1 Carbine Paratrooper**
Average Velocity	1902 fps	1816 fps
Muzzle Energy	884 ft.-lbs.	806 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	2.6 in.	2.1 in.
Average Group	2.85 in.	2.6 in.
Hornady 30 Carbine 110-gr. FMJ	**Inland Mfg. M1 1945 Carbine**	**Auto-Ordnance M1 Carbine Paratrooper**
Average Velocity	2046 fps	1984 fps
Muzzle Energy	1023 ft.-lbs.	962 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	3.0 in.	2.25 in.
Average Group	3.05 in.	2.67 in.
Hornady Critical Defense 30 Carbine 110-gr. FTX	**Inland Mfg. M1 1945 Carbine**	**Auto-Ordnance M1 Carbine Paratrooper**
Average Velocity	1982 fps	1866 fps
Muzzle Energy	960 ft.-lbs.	851 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	2.4 in.	2.4 in.
Average Group	2.75 in.	2.8 in.
Aguila 30 Carbine 110-gr. FMJ	**Inland Mfg. M1 1945 Carbine**	**Auto-Ordnance M1 Carbine Paratrooper**
Average Velocity	1960 fps	1901 fps
Muzzle Energy	938 ft.-lbs.	883 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	2.05 in.	2.1 in.
Average Group	2.25 in.	2.3 in.
Tulammo 30 Carbine 110-gr. FMJ	**Inland Mfg. M1 1945 Carbine**	**Auto-Ordnance M1 Carbine Paratrooper**
Average Velocity	1953 fps	1893 fps
Muzzle Energy	932 ft.-lbs.	875 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	2.65 in.	2.0 in.
Average Group	2.87 in.	2.55 in.

To collect accuracy data, we fired three-shot groups from a bench using a rest. Distance: 100 yards with open sights. We recorded velocities using a ProChrono digital chronograph set 15 feet from the muzzle.





The Inland's rear sight, left, is more user friendly and more easily adjustable; the aperture slides up or down the ramp for elevation, and the knob adjusts windage. The rear sight on the A-O, right, is drift adjustable and offered two apertures for different distances. Note the bolt hold-back button (arrow) near the A-O's handle.

at the pistol grip with their firing hand. Some became pretty efficient reloading the Carbine during testing.

Ammo can be difficult to find at big box and smaller retailers. We found some locally in North Carolina (GunShopJax.com) some IMI (Israeli Military Industries) ammo with 110-grain SP (soft point) bullets for $30 for a box of 50 cartridges. Online, it is quite easy to source ammo. We purchased Hornady Critical Defense with 110-grain FTX bullets ($33/20), Hornady 30 Carbine with 110-grain full metal jacket (FMJ) bullets ($39/50), Aguila 110-grain FMJs ($24/50), and steel-case TulAmmo rounds, also with 110-grain FMJs ($15/50). If you see the trend, the 30 Carbine's sweet spot is the 110-grain bullet. Military ammo was loaded to a muzzle velocity of 1990 fps and muzzle energy of 967 foot-pounds. Of the four ammo types tested, the Hornady Critical Defense ammo was loaded to 2000 fps, while the TulAmmo, IMI, Hornady standard, and Aguila were at military velocity of about 1990 fps. The TulAmmo had the lowest velocity of all ammo tested. The cost is about 4 cents a round, making 30 Carbine ammo slightly less expensive than 223 Remington ammo.

The 30 Carbine has a reputation as being an anemic cartridge, and that is true if you compare it against the 30-06 Springfield. The 30 Carbine round was designed as an intermediate cartridge between the 30-06 Springfield in the M1 Garand and 45 ACP in the M1911A1 pistol. The 30 Carbine fits the role, but push it too far, and naturally it will underperform because it was not designed to replace the 30-06. As a hunting round, it can kill up to deer-size game if used at medium distances down to inside 100 yards.

Magazines—new and surplus—are quite easy to acquire and inexpensive, from $8 to $35 depending on manufacturer and capacity. The M1 Carbine was originally issued with a 15-round magazine, and 10-, 15-, and 30-round magazines are the most common. Less common are 5-round

INLAND MANUFACTURING M1 1945 CARBINE
30 CARBINE, $1079
GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

The Inland M1 costs more, but it offered a good interpretation of the last production M1 Carbine manufactured in 1945.



Action Type	Semi-automatic gas-operated short-stroke piston	Action Finish	Parkerized
Overall Length	35.75 in.	Barrel Finish	Parkerized
Barrel Length	18 in.	Magazine Type	Detachable steel box
Sights	Adj. aperture rear, fixed front	Stock	Smooth walnut
Overall Height	6.9 in.	Trigger Pull Weight	6.1 lbs., single stage
Stock Length of Pull	13.2 in.	Safety	Pushbutton
Weight Unloaded	5.2 lbs.	Warranty	1 year
Weight Loaded	5.8 lbs.	Telephone	(877) 425-4867
Capacity	15+1	Website	Inland-Mfg.com
		Made In	U.S.A.



We felt the Inland was a good facsimile of the original carbine in overall cosmetics, including the stock. It was a plain piece of walnut with an Inland cartouche on the right side.



A bayonet lug on the Inland makes this Carbine historically correct; early original Carbines did not have a bayonet lug.



We ran 15-round and 30-round magazines through both carbines. That's a reproduction canvas four-pocket magazine pouch (Auto-Ordnance.com; $21).



The buttpad was well fitted and slightly textured so it was fast to shoulder.

AUTO-ORDNANCE M1 CARBINE PARATROOPER MODEL AOM150 30 CARBINE, $941

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

The A-O Paratrooper is easier to transport due to the folding stock, and it offered good reliability and a lot of shooting fun. We think it is a good interpretation of the WWII model.



Action Type	Semi-automatic, gas-operated short-stroke piston	Barrel Finish	Parkerized
Overall Length	35.75 in.	Magazine Type	Detachable steel box
Barrel Length	18.0 in.	Stock	Smooth walnut handguard, folding wire stock
Sights	Flip aperture rear, fixed front		
Overall Height	6.9 in.	Trigger Pull Weight	Single stage, 7.1 lbs.
Buttstock Length of Pull	13.2 in.	Safety	Pushbutton
Weight Unloaded	5.3 lbs.	Warranty	1 year
Weight Loaded	5.9 lbs.	Telephone	(508) 795-3919
Capacity	15+1	Website	Auto-Ordnance.com
Action Finish	Parkerized	Made In	U.S.A.





Left: With the stock folded, the Carbine is more compact, but it can still be ready to fire. Right: Two indents in the side of the stock allow the wire stock to fold closer to the side of the rifle.





Left: A flat and unpadded leather cheek piece made the A-O slightly less comfortable to shoot, but was historically accurate. Right: The buttpad was metal and twisted to the side when the stock is the folded position. Crude looking, but effective.



The pushbutton safety (left arrow) is behind the pushbutton magazine release; some testers mixed them up at first, but with a little time on the gun, they managed fast reloads with the light rifle.

magazines. We also acquired a new 30-round magazine from the A-O website (Auto-Ordnance.com; $35) and ran the magazine in both rifles.

We tested with iron sights at 25 yards and 100 yards to see how well, or not so well, the Carbines performed. We were pleasantly surprised at the accuracy and performance. Here is what we learned from these reproduction M1 Carbines.

Inland Manufacturing M1 1945 Carbine 30 Carbine, $1079

The M1 1945 Carbine is modeled after the last M1 Carbine the original Inland manufactured in 1945. Inland Manufacturing was founded in 2013. The company purchased the rights to use the Inland Manufacturing name, which during WWII was a division of General Motors. Back in the day, Inland produced most of the M1 Carbines for the government in Dayton, Ohio, and the new Inland is also located in Dayton, but it has no affiliation with GM. All parts are made in the U.S. According to Inland, all the parts of a new M1 are interchangeable with parts from an original M1.

Opening the box, the owner finds the Inland M1 set into die-cut foam and sees that it comes with a canvas sling, oiler (which is used to hold the sling into the stock) and one 15-round magazine.

The M1 1945 Carbine is made with an investment-cast receiver mated to an 18-inch barrel with four grooves and a 1:20-inch twist rate. The features that make the Inland historically accurate are numerous, including the type-3 bayonet lug and barrel band. Early original production rifles had no bayonet lug. The lug was later incorporated into the design. Original M1s also had simplified sights, a flip-up aperture with two settings, one for 150 yards and the second for 300 yards. Later models used a modified sight with a sliding ramp, and so does the new Inland.

The new Inland also uses a pushbutton safety. Late-model originals changed the safety from a pushbutton to a rotating lever.

Elsewhere, original M1s had a flat bolt — basically, the top of the bolt was milled flat. Later models used a round bolt to reduce manufacturing time. These features were also incorporated into the new Inland.

The walnut stock is referred to as a "low wood" stock, which means it is relieved next to the operating slide. Early M1s had wood nearly covering the slide, and the wood was prone to splitting in this area. From a historical perspective, we felt the Inland was a good facsimile of the original carbine.

The stock on the Inland was a plain piece of walnut with an Inland cartouche on the right side of the stock near the metal buttpad. The metal on the action wore a nice Parkerized finish. The steel magazine was blued. The trigger was a single stage with some creep that broke at 6.1 pounds, comparable to other M1s we fired at the same time for reference. Typical service-style trigger. In hand, the Inland was lively and came to the shoulder fast.

We found the sights allowed us to easily acquire a target. We first fired the Inland with Aguila ammo, which is close to mil-spec ammo, and we found the rifle ran well. No issues. We did find that the Hornady Critical defense ammo initially did not feed properly. The bullet tip would jam on the feed ramp. Critical Defense FTX bullets have a polymer insert in the bullet's hollow point. The bullet shape also has more of a point. We measured the cartridge length and found the Hornady Critical Defense cartridge had an overall length of 1.68 inches, which is the maximum SAAMI length for 30 Carbine cartridges. The other ammo measured 1.67 inches, on average. One thing to note, ball ammo or FMJs operate best in original M1 Carbines, and in the Inland we found this to be true as well. The rounded FMJ bullet tip helps the cartridge feed better. We thought we would have the same ammo issue with the IWI ammo, which uses a soft-point bullet, but the IWI ran flawlessly. We dinged the Inland rifle's final grade a half notch as a result because the OAL of the Hornady cartridge was to spec.

At 100 yards, the Aguila ammo performed well, and we were able to shoot our tightest three-shot group, which measured 2.05 inches. The TulAmmo rounds and Hornady Critical Defense also gave good accuracy, averaging close to 2.75 inches. In fact, we were quite pleased with the results because we were using iron sights and a mil-spec-comparable trigger.

Recoil was mild with not a lot of muzzle blast. Those new to the Carbine easily took to the round and rifle and found it easy to shoot. At 25 yards, fast follow-up shots were quick because recoil was minimal. Since the rifle is only 36 inches long, it is easy to maneuver. With an unloaded rifle, we maneuvered through rooms and hallways with ease. In our opinion, at the distances typically encountered in a home invasion, the Carbine offers plenty of punch. There are less expensive options available, but the Inland could serve as good home-defense firearm.



Our test rounds included, from left to right, Hornady Critical Defense with 110-grain FTX bullets, which caused some function problems in the Inland, steel-case TulAmmo rounds with 110-grain FMJs, Hornady 30 Carbine with 110-grain full-metal-jacket bullets, and IMI ammo with 110-grain soft points.



Accuracy with both firearms exceeded the platform's historical reputation. Right: This three-shot A-0 group was fired at 25 yards with TulAmmo.



Right: This was a typical group with both Carbines at close range, here with the Hornady 30 Carbine round.



Right: At 100 yards, the Hornady standard 30 Carbine round shot 3-inch groups with the Inland's open sights. Not too shabby with irons.

Likewise, we would use the Inland in CMP M1 Carbine Matches. These matches are fired at 100 yards in four stages with slow and rapid fire and from prone, standing, sitting, and kneeling positions. For this use, the Inland would be a good alternative to an original.

Our Team Said: The M1 1945 was pleasant to shoot, and we would use it for tasks as diverse as competition as well as keeping the ranch safe. It was historically accurate, and collectors of original M1 Carbines would do themselves a service by shooting a new repro rather than wearing out an original and reducing the value. It is

an expensive home-defense option, but we wouldn't mind using it in that role, if push came to shove.

Auto-Ordnance M1 Carbine Paratrooper, 30 Carbine, $941

The A-O is a reproduction of the Model M1A1, which is a model variant specifically designed for paratroopers who required a shorter weapon. The original Inland manufactured the M1A1 back in the day. These are rare and quite collectible, and we imagine a collector would be loath to fire a valuable specimen. In our opinion, the A-O makes a great stand-in for the original. Like early original M1A1s, the A-O had no bayonet lug, and the stock was close to original's, even down to the brass rivets that attached the leather cheek rest to the wire stock.

The sights were per the original, a simple flip-up aperture with two settings, one for 150 yards and the second for 300 yards. Windage was drift adjustable. We preferred the sights on the Inland because they were easier to adjust, but this sight set-up on the A-O is historically accurate, if that's more to your liking.

The stock does not lock in an open or closed position. A detent keeps the stock in position, and when we fired using the stock, we could easily knock it out of the open position. Again, this is a feature on this older design. The rest of the stock was plain walnut. The pistol grip was thick and filled the average-size hand. The stock was made of a heavy-gauge wire with a flat unpadded cheek rest and a steel buttpad. The stock folded to the left side of the rifle, and like on the originals, the left side of the stock was milled out and the buttpad pivots to the side so the stocks fold flatter against the wood under the receiver.

Elsewhere, the A-O was a close copy of the original M1A1 produced in 1942-43. The rear sight, folding stock, no bayonet lug, and flat-milled bolt top are period correct. The rear sight on the A-O is the simple drift-adjustable sight. The A-O's stock and sight don't actually sync up. The low-wood stock is a feature of Carbines built in 1944. The rear sight is from earlier models. That's nit-picking and is not a game changer by any means, if you're looking at this rifle as a portable shooter.

Magazines inserted easily, but we needed to make sure with both Carbines that it was fully seated. When we loaded a magazine of the Hornady Critical Defense ammo, we expected a similar jam as we had in the Inland, but that did not happen. The A-O chewed through all the ammo with no exceptions. Looking at the feed ramps of both rifles, we noticed the A-O was more polished and finished. We suspected the extra polishing on the A-O allowed it to feed the Critical Defense ammo better than the Inland. We used the two 15-round magazines that came with the Carbines and the 30-round magazine interchangeably and had no issues with either rifle. Pressing the magazine release on both the Inland and A-O allowed the magazines to drop free. On the last shot fired, the bolt locked back, open, due to the design of the magazine follower. This allows the user to lock the bolt back by pulling the bolt fully rearward and pressing the bolt hold-back button — a handy feature.



The A-O (bottom) did not have a bayonet lug like the Inland (top); this difference made each rifle historically correct.



The polished feed ramp on the A-O pictured at left fed all ammo with no issues, even modern hollowpoint ammunition. The Inland hiccuped with the Hornady FTX bullet. At right is a detail of the feed ramp of the A-O showing its high polish that we think helped function.



At 25 yards, one tester was able to shoot a near perfect three-shot cloverleaf with the A-O using the inexpensive TulAmmo. Recoil was more noticeable with the A-O since the cheekpiece on the wire stock was not as comfortable. The best average accuracy was attained with Aguila ammo. One tester was able to shoot a 2.0-inch three-shot group at 100 yards with inexpensive TulAmmo; 2.1-inch best groups were obtained with Aguila and IWI. On average, we achieved 2.3- to 2.8-inch groups at 100 yards with three shots. The trigger pull weight averaged 7 pounds, but we still were able to shoot some decent groups. Looking at the data, we noticed the A-O had less muzzle velocity with all ammo types than the Inland.

With the stock folded, we fired from the hip and found it quite easy to walk in hits on clay pigeons set out on a bank at 25 yards. The A-O was also light enough that we could shoot it one handed.

Our Team Said: The A-O was extremely fun to shoot and quite accurate. The folding wire stock is not as stable as the wood stock, but it offers a smaller package to carry. As a home-defense rifle or truck rifle, the A-O is a good choice.

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

VALUE GUIDE: HISTORICAL SEMI-AUTO RIFLE RANKINGS

GUN NAME	ISSUE	GRADE	COMMENTS
Polytech M14S Custom 308 Win., ~$1900	Dec. 2010	A	Included a chrome-lined Winchester barrel. The excellent Chinese receiver was forged.
Fulton Armory M14 308 Win., $2755	Dec. 2010	A	The stock on the Fulton was not quite as slim and trim as the original G.I. on the custom Polytech.
CMP Service Grade M1 Garand (Int'l Harvester) 30-06, $550	June 2002	A	This rifle had authenticity, an excellent barrel, and acceptable wood.
Fulton Armory Service Grade M1 Garand 30-06 Springfield, $1400	Sept. 2005	A	High degree of authenticity because of the use of original G.I. actions in its makeup.
Fulton Armory Service Grade M1 Carbine 30 US Carbine, $1000	Jan. 2003	A	An M1 Carbine that is close to what G.I.s were issued during WWII or Korea.
Springfield Armory SOCOM 16 308 Win., $1,727	May 2005	A	The high price gave pause to most shooters. Everyone who saw the SOCOM 16 wanted one.
Springfield M1A 308 Win., $1739	Dec. 2010	A-	Didn't have quite the accuracy of the Fulton M14, but was probably sufficient for most uses.
Springfield Armory M1A AA9627 SOCOM II 308 Win., $2090	Nov. 2008	A-	The SOCOM II is expensive, but you will be the boss of the block.
Springfield Loaded M1A MA9826 7.62 NATO/308 Win. $1893	May 2014	B+	The polymer stock had the slim shape and feel of original stocks. Also, it had fabulous accuracy.
Springfield Armory Loaded M1A MA9226 308 Win., $2363	May 2009	B+	We think this rifle did a good job of handling the powerful 308 round.
Early Winchester M1 Carbine 30 US Carbine, $550	Jan. 2003	B+	If you can find a good original Winchester-made M1 carbine, expect to pay a premium for the name.
Citadel M-1 22 Carbine CIR22M1W 22 LR, $399	May 2012	B	As handy as the original, only a finish downgrade keeps this fun gun from getting a higher grade.
CMP Greek Issue Service Grade Garand 30-06 Springfield, $550	Sept. 2005	B	The CMP is to be congratulated for keeping up this policy of offering sound rifles to civilians.
Springfield Armory M1 Garand 30-06 Springfield, $1348	Sept. 2005	B	Workmanship was excellent, and everything worked properly. Price was fair for what you get.
IAI American Legend, Inc. 30 Carbine, $538	Jan. 2003	C	The rifle did not work perfectly with ammunition for which it was chambered.
Surplus M1 Garand 30-06 Springfield, $450	June 2002	F	For roughly $100 more, you could have gotten very good rifle from the CMP.
Springfield Armory Garand 30-06, $1061	June 2002	F	Our test sample failed SAAMI specs. The too-short neck dimension resulted in excess pressure.

Log on to **Gun-Tests.com** to read complete reviews of these products in the designated months. Highly-ranked products from older reviews are often available used at substantial discounts.

Used 38 Sp. Revolver Contest: Colt, Smith & Wesson, Ruger

We tested four double-action revolvers and found that all had appeal, but some made more sense than others — in particular, we think the S&W Military and Police is a working classic.

Revolvers make excellent home-defense handguns. They are simple to use and reliable and will come up shooting after long periods of storage. There are no springs compressed when the revolver is loaded, and no magazines to keep up with. The revolver may be chambered for powerful and efficient cartridges, such as the 38 Special +P and the 357 Magnum. For shooters able to engage in only minimal training, the revolver makes a lot of sense. Conversely, many very experienced shooters trust the revolver and little else. The smooth-rolling double-action trigger helps avoid flinch and the rhythm, once learned, allows excellent hit probability.

We set out to find four used revolvers for this Bargain Hunter segment. They had to be high quality and chambered for either the 38 Special or 357 Magnum cartridge, with the emphasis on 38 Special. While most homeowners will load these revolvers with 38 Special ammunition, the 357 Magnum is certainly a viable option, so we tested the revolvers chambered for the Magnum cartridge with these heavy loads as well. Because we were looking for bargains, we limited the used cost to a maximum of $500 counter price. We found one revolver at that maximum and three for considerably less, including two revolvers at $300. We chose medium-frame revolvers for two of the handguns and small frames for the other two handguns. Three were six-shot revolvers and one was a five-shooter. We elected not to pursue heavy-frame revolvers, such as the Smith &



Top: If you want a nice heavy-barrel 38 Special, the smooth Military and Police 38 Special was the best buy and most accurate revolver. Second from top: The Smith & Wesson Model 19 was well made, but it was quirky due to its skinny grips and heavy felt recoil with 357 Magnum loads. Second from bottom: The Colt Police Positive Special was at the bottom of the heap. Bottom: The Ruger SP101 is the only revolver of this quarter still in production, at least in its original form. For daily use, we would pick the Ruger SP101 based on ruggedness, control with heavy loads, compact frame size, and its ability to fire 357 Magnums. With a little hunting, there are similar bargains available at a gun show or used-gun counter near you.



Right: Our tallest rater found the Ruger SP101 to be a good fit for his hands. A light, compact 357 Magnum revolver can be a formidable defensive handgun.



Right: The most controllable handgun was the Smith & Wesson Military and Police 38 Special.

38 SPECIAL RANGE DATA

Black Hills 38 Special D38N3 148-gr. Hollow Base Wadcutter (HBWC)	**Colt PPS 38 Special**	**Ruger SP101 357 Mag.**	**S&W M&P 38 Special**	**S&W M19 357 Mag.**
Average Velocity	740 fps	755 fps	770 fps	726 fps
Muzzle Energy	179 ft.-lbs.	187 ft.-lbs.	194 ft.-lbs.	173 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	2.8 in.	2.5 in.	1.8 in.	2.3 in.
Largest Group	3.6 in.	3.3 in.	2.3 in.	2.6 in.
Average Group Size	3.3 in.	2.9 in.	2.0 in.	2.4 in.
Winchester Super-X Cowboy Action 158-gr. Lead Flat Nose USA38CB	**Colt PPS 38 Special**	**Ruger SP101 357 Mag.**	**S&W M&P 38 Special**	**S&W M19 357 Mag.**
Average Velocity	739 fps	788 fps	801 fps	760 fps
Muzzle Energy	191 ft.-lbs.	217 ft.-lbs.	225 ft.-lbs.	202 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	3.8 in.	2.5 in.	2.3 in.	2.6 in.
Largest Group	4.5 in.	3.5 in.	2.8 in.	3.4 in.
Average Group Size	4.0 in.	3.0 in.	2.5 in.	2.9 in.
Hornady Critical Defense 38 Sp. +P 110-gr. FTX Hollowpoint 90311	**Colt PPS 38 Special**	**Ruger SP101 357 Mag.**	**S&W M&P 38 Special**	**S&W M19 357 Mag.**
Average Velocity	955 fps	970 fps	1038 fps	998 fps
Muzzle Energy	222 ft.-lbs.	229 ft.-lbs.	263 ft.-lbs.	243 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	3.0 in.	2.3 in.	1.9 in.	2.0 in.
Largest Group	3.8 in.	2.7 in.	2.5 in.	2.7 in.
Average Group Size	3.4 in.	2.4 in.	2.3 in.	2.4 in.

To collect accuracy data, we fired five-shot groups off a solid benchrest. Distance: 25 yards. We recorded velocities with a Competition Electronics Chrony Chronograph. The first sky screen was set 10 feet from the muzzle.

Ammunition notes: *Black Hills Ammunition 148-grain HBWC D38N3, $27/50 @ LuckyGunner.com; Hornady Critical Defense 38 Sp. +P 110-gr. FTX Hollowpoint 90311, $19/25 @ MidwayUSA.com; Winchester Super-X Cowboy Action 158-gr. Lead Flat Nose USA38CB, $37/50 @ TombstoneTactical.com.*

Wesson L frame or Ruger GP100, and we also did not look for J-frame type snubnose revolvers. Basically, we were looking for affordable houseguns that would do a credible job of home defense if called upon. The contenders were as follows:

● Colt Police Positive Special 38 Special, $300. The Colt PPS is a 4-inch-barrel double-action revolver. This revolver was introduced as a more powerful version of the Police Positive. The earlier revolver was chambered for various 32- and short 38-caliber cartridges. We turned down a similar Colt for less money that was much nicer, but which was chambered for the less powerful 38 Smith & Wesson cartridge. This old fat round lobs a 146-grain bullet at about 600 fps with modern loads, so we passed on it for home defense.

● Smith & Wesson Military and Police 38 Special, ~$300. Smith & Wesson's double-action medium-frame revolver has been in production for more than 115 years. It is easily the most popular double-action revolver ever manufactured. The revolver is typical of handguns issued to harness cops from 1900 to the late 1980s. Our example was made in 1957. The revolver featured a 4-inch barrel, and at some point, it had been fitted with plastic Safariland grips. These grips are no longer available. The grips were at least the equal of modern rubber grips in control and fit. A Hogue MonoGrip should give similar results if you want to regrip a Military and Police revolver for yourself.

● Smith & Wesson Model 19 357 Magnum, $500. This is a powerful revolver in a now-uncommon barrel length. We thought that based on utility, the revolver was pricey, but then it was manufactured in 1977 and is very smooth — smoother than all the other revolvers. This revolver operated in the same manner as the Military and Police revolver; indeed, it is simply a Military and Police revolver with nice sights and a longer cylinder.

● Ruger SP101 5718 357 Magnum, $450. This revolver lists new for $719, and we saw a price for a new one at BudsGunShop.com for $500. Our test revolver was purchased used at SCGunCo.com for $450, making it the second-most expensive revolver tested. Considering we did not pay shipping and the revolver was as new, we probably saved about $100. We saved a lot more with the Smith & Wesson revolvers over new price of

COLT POLICE POSITIVE SPECIAL 38 SPECIAL, ~$300

GUN TESTS GRADE: C

If you like history, the Colt Police Positive Special is a cool gun. This revolver appeared original in all respects and has been operating since 1933. One of our raters writes for American Gunsmith, a sister publication to Gun Tests, and he inspected the revolver. He believed all springs and parts in this wheelgun were original. As it turns out, research conducted after our shoot-out shows that the grip design was criticized even back in the day. Recoil was a problem, with the revolver squirming in the hand. Accuracy was less than the other handguns. This is a handgun best left in the showcase.



Action	Double Action
Overall Height	5.3 in.
Overall Length	7.0 in.
Maximum Width	1.4 in.
Weight Unloaded	26 oz.
Weight Loaded	28.5 oz.
Barrel Length	4 in.
Capacity	6
Frame	Steel
Cylinder	Steel

Frame Front Strap Height	2.4 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.3 in.
Grips	Plastic
Grip Thickness (max)	1.5 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.1 in.
Front Sight	Fixed half moon
Rear Sight	Fixed notch
Sight Radius	6.0 in.
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	3.9 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight Double Action	13.5 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.6 in.
Trigger Span Double Action	3.0 in.
Safety	None
Warranty	None, used gun
Telephone	(800) 962-COLT
Website	Colt.com
Made In	USA



Even though it showed serious finish loss, the Colt was not corroded, which means it had a least received a wipe down from time to time. The old Colt was well worn, but tight.



The Colt thumb-rest grips shown protruding upward were okay because all of the raters were right handed. We'd advise lefties to check this particular grip for comfort before buying.



It is a tribute to Colt that the PPS revolver is still going after 83 years of service. The Colt gave good results off the barricade, but its greatest problem was recoil due to its skinny grips and light weight.

comparable revolvers, but then they are well used. The Ruger was the only stainless-steel handgun in this test. Here's how they performed:

Colt Police Positive Special 38 Special, $300

The Colt PPS is a small-frame handgun. The finish of this revolver rated perhaps 50%. There was no corrosion, but little bluing was left. The bore and chambers were inspected and found to be functional. The action was smooth and even with no hitches. The Colt was fitted with special-order Colt grips with a thumb rest on the left grip. These are not super rare, but neither are they common. The grips were okay for shooting by righties, but they would be bad news for a left-handed shooter, we thought.

The Colt cylinder release pulls to the rear to disengage the cylinder for loading. The Colt indexes the cartridge to the left of the hammer, while the Smith & Wesson and Ruger revolvers index the cartridge to the right of the hammer first. This is something to be aware of if, like one of our raters, you keep a Glaser Safety Slug up first and then follow with standard JHP loads. In other words, the Colt rotates left to right, while the others rotate right to left when viewed from the rear.

The Colt had broad rear sights that were easily picked up in rapid fire. The front post was a half-round type typical of 1930s production. The Colt was manufactured in 1933. The question was, where is the top of the sight? This isn't the best front sight for precision use. The action was smooth, maybe even very smooth, but with a different feel than the other revolvers. The grip fit small hands well. While handfit was fine for most testers, as we learned during firing, this wasn't the best angle for firing heavy loads. During the firing test, we used three loads. These included the Black Hills Ammunition 148-grain wadcutter, the Hornady 110-grain Critical Defense FTX bullet, and the Winchester 158-grain cowboy load with a flat lead tip. The revolver

was originally rated for High Speed loads, and we had no qualm in firing +P loads. With the wadcutter loads, recoil was mild and manageable and remained so with the Winchester loads. With the +P load, recoil was more abrupt than the other handguns. The thin grips and light weight of the Colt were the culprits. We fired the Colt at silhouette targets at 5, 7, and 10 yards with five rounds of each load at each distance, for a total of 45 cartridges. By the last string, the +P loads began to sting a little. A set of Hogue or Pachmayr grips would have been a good addition. (Order for the Colt D frame or Detective Special.) Combat groups were acceptable, but they were the largest of the test. The times were slow as we recovered from recoil.

The sights were well regulated for 158-grain loads, and fired an inch or so low at 10 yards with the 110-grain JHP and a dead-on hold. Fired from a supported benchrest position, we learned the Colt was acceptably accurate for personal defense, but we would have liked better accuracy for hiking or field use and taking care of a dangerous reptile or perhaps potting small game. The best group of the day was 2.75 inches at 25 yards, but the average was much larger, with one load averaging 4 inches.

Our Team Said: Three years ago, we tested a PPS in better condition, but our evaluation then was similar to our opinions today: "The Colt was an interesting piece of history, but it has had its day. No doubt the revolver is quality construction made in bygone era, and it proved its accuracy. But testers felt they would rather have the S&W." This time around, we bought the Colt with a budget in mind, and we found it was light enough for concealed carry as well as a home-defense handgun. It was more difficult to use well than the short-barrel revolvers tested, and we found it was much more difficult to fire well than the Smith & Wesson Military and Police revolver. We rated the Colt down for its recoil and poor accuracy in comparison to the others.

SMITH & WESSON MILITARY AND POLICE 38 SPECIAL, $300

GUN TESTS GRADE: A (BEST BUY)

This revolver is large enough to soak up the recoil of +P loads but remains light enough for fast handling. It delivered better combat accuracy and better slow-fire accuracy than any other revolver in this test. At less than half the price of a new Model 10, the Military and Police 38 is a great revolver. If you find one at a fair price, grab it.



Action	Double Action
Overall Length	8.9 in.
Overall Height	5.8 in.
Maximum Width	1.5 in.
Weight Unloaded	34.0 oz.
Weight Loaded	36.5 oz.
Barrel Length	4 in.
Capacity	6
Frame	Steel, K-frame
Cylinder	Steel
Frame Front Strap Height	2.2 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	4.2 in.
Grips	Plastic Aftermarket (Obsolete)
Grip Thickness (Max.)	1.2 in.
Grip Circumference (Max.)	5.5 in.
Front Sight	Ramp type, fixed
Rear Sight	Fixed
Sight Radius	6.1 in.
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	3.5 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight Double Action	12 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.6 in.
Trigger Span Double Action	3.25 in.
Safety	None
Warranty	None
Telephone	(800) 331-0852
Website	Smith-Wesson.com
Made In	U.S.A.



The finish of the Military and Police revolver was generally good, with a bit of muzzle wear.



The fixed sights didn't hamper accurate shooting. The front sight was a ramp that was easy to see. The Smith & Wesson action staged well, allowing the shooter to move the hammer almost to the firing point and then continuing with the press.



The action was very tight and smooth. The bore and chambers were in excellent condition.

Smith & Wesson Military and Police 38 Special, ~$300

The action was very tight and smooth in operation. The bore and chambers were in excellent condition. The sights were good examples of fixed sights. The front sight was a ramp that allows accurate fire. The Smith & Wesson action lends

SMITH & WESSON MODEL 19 357 MAGNUM, ~$500

GUN TESTS GRADE: C

The Model 19 is a great-shooting short-barrel revolver, but the short barrel is a drawback compared to the Military and Police revolver. The square-butt frame of the larger 38 Special also gave better control than the 357 Magnum Model 19's round butt. When we fired Magnums in the Model 19, the situation became worse. While the Model 19 Combat Magnum is a fine revolver, it is a specialist's handgun, and one most of us will find too expensive for the performance delivered.



Action	Double Action
Overall Length	7.4 in.
Overall Height	5.8 in.
Maximum Width	1.5 in.
Weight Unloaded	35.0 oz.
Weight Loaded	37.5 oz
Barrel Length	2.5 in.
Capacity	6
Frame	Steel, K Frame

Cylinder Material	Steel
Frame Front Strap Height	2.2 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	4.2 in.
Grips	Wood
Grip Thickness Max	1.2 in.
Grip Circumference Max	5.2 in.
Front Sight	Ramp type, fixed with orange insert
Rear Sight	Adjustable
Sight Radius	4.6 in.
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	4.0 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight Double Action	12.0 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.6 in.
Trigger Span Double Action	3.25 in.
Safety	None
Warranty	None
Telephone	(800) 331-0852
Website	Smith-Wesson.com
Made In	U.S.A.



The Model 19's adjustable sights were useful for getting the revolver to shoot where the owner aimed. The others didn't offer this ease of use.



A ramp front sight with orange insert made for good shooting both at the combat range and in precision shooting.



Fired off hand, the Smith & Wesson Combat Magnum gave credible results, but concentration is always demanded by a short-barrel revolver.

itself well to staging, bringing the hammer almost to the firing point and then continuing with the press.

The cylinder release presses forward to open the cylinder. The cylinder rotated right to left. The finish of the Military and Police revolver was generally good, with a bit of muzzle wear. The Smith & Wesson weighed more than the Colt, but this is an advantage in home defense use versus concealed carry. It is recoil-soaking weight, and 34 ounces isn't heavy for occasional carry. With good weight and balance, a 4-inch barrel and a smooth action, we expected the Smith & Wesson to be a good shooter.

On the firing range results were excellent in combat fire. The revolver was more comfortable to fire than the Colt, the Ruger, or the other Smith & Wesson revolver. Combat accuracy was excellent. The single smallest grouping was with the Black Hills Ammunition 148-grain wadcutter. At a long 25 yards, the Military and Police settled five shots into 1.75 inches.

Our Team Said: Easy to use well but powerful enough for personal defense, the Smith & Wesson Military and Police impressed all raters. Absolute accuracy was the best of the test, despite the excellent sights and smooth action of the Model 19 we also fired. Other guns, such as the Combat Masterpiece and other target-sighted 38s, may offer better accuracy, but the practical Military and Police revolver is more affordable and its intrinsic accuracy just as good. This revolver is a Best Buy and is our pick of the four revolvers tested here.

Smith & Wesson Model 19 357 Magnum, $500

The Smith & Wesson adjustable sights were very nice, allowing perfect sighting in with proper adjustment. That is a good feature, because, as purchased, the sights were ramped up so far the revolver fired 4 inches high at 7 yards. It was a simple matter to adjust them for the proper elevation. The ramp front-post sight allows excellent accuracy and a high hit probability. For all-round use, these are the best sights ever

fitted to a revolver, in the opinion of our raters.

This revolver was finished in nickel. While it was overall nice in appearance, the nickel was flaking in some areas. The revolver featured a round-butt frame and came fitted with the original grips. The grips were adequate when firing 38 Special loads, but squirmed when firing the Magnum load tested on a limited basis. Both the Ruger SP101 and the Smith & Wesson Military and Police revolver were easier to control with 38 Special +P loads. The short barrel proved plenty accurate for slow-fire work. During the firing stage, we added a 357 Magnum load for comparison in the Ruger SP101. The Cor-Bon 110-grain JHP is intended as a personal-defense load and offers less recoil than heavier 125- to 158-grain Magnum loads. During the firing string, we fired the same loads in 38 Special on the combat course. The results were good, equal to the Military and Police revolver with all three loads. However, the 357 Magnum load was a bear. The skinny grips were not the best for this type of work. The revolver shifted in the hands. Some raters had to adjust the grip after every shot. This is the personal gun of one of the raters, and he added a set of custom grips from Brownells.com. The Hideout revolver grips are only $19, but they add much more control to the revolver. And this modification was needed. But we did not figure these grips into the rating because the revolver was purchased without these grips.

In absolute accuracy, the Smith & Wesson Model 19 came in second behind the Military and Police revolver. The Model 19's best group was 1.9 inches with the Hornady 110-grain Critical Defense load.

Our Team Said: We rated the Model 19 down a full grade based on its price as tested. We do not feel that $500 for a used revolver is a good deal compared to the modest cost of the 38 Special revolvers and a new Ruger 357 Magnum revolver. We did not rate performance with the 357 Magnum rounds because the test centered upon the 38 Special cartridge, but the Ruger offered better control with the Magnum load. Also, during the test, the Model 19's ejector rod became loose and had to be tightened, standard operating procedure

RUGER SP101 5718 KSP321X 357 MAGNUM, $450

GUN TESTS GRADE: B-

The Ruger SP101 is a light handgun, but it gave a firing impressions similar to the larger revolvers. Powerful and accurate, the Ruger has a lot going for it. It is the only revolver tested currently in production in its original form. For a combination of carry and home defense, the Ruger gets high marks. The larger revolvers simply outshot it. For those with small hands, it is a very good choice.



Action	Double Action
Overall Height	4.8 in.
Overall Length	7.2 in.
Maximum Width	1.35 in.
Weight Unloaded	26 oz.
Weight Loaded	28.2 oz.
Barrel Length	2.25 in.
Capacity	5
Frame	Stainless, small frame
Cylinder	Stainless steel
Frame Front Strap Height	1.8 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.3 In.
Grips	Rubber and plastic, ribbed sides
Grip Thickness (Max.)	1.24 in.
Grip Circumference (Max.)	4.5 in.
Front Sight	Fixed
Rear Sight	Fixed
Sight Radius	3.6 in.
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	5.0 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight Double Action	14.0 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.4 in.
Trigger Span Double Action	2.95 in.
Safety	None
Warranty	No Written Warranty
Telephone	(336) 949-5200
Website	Ruger.Com
Made In	U.S.A.



The Galco Carry Lite holster gave good results when packing the compact Ruger revolver. For ammunition suitable for the SP101 and the S&W Model 19 in 357 Magnum, please consult the ammunition test on page 29.



The Magnum revolvers tested were the Ruger SP 101, in stainless steel, top, and the nickel-plated S&W M19 357 Magnum, bottom. Stout and reliable, the Ruger SP101 has a lot going for it. The S&W Model 19 was perhaps the nicest revolver to use and handle due to a smooth action and high-profile adjustable sights, but it wasn't the best shooter.



Left to right: To open these revolvers, press in the cylinder latch on the SP101, pull back the cylinder latch on the Colt, and press forward the cylinder latch on the S&W Model 19.

for used Smith & Wesson revolvers and more common problem with 357 Magnum revolvers than 38 Special-only versions.

Ruger SP101 5718 357 Magnum, $450

We feel that stainless is a big plus if you can get it in a handgun you like. The Ruger was fairly compact, the smallest revolver tested, although the Police Positive Special was close. The Ruger featured a cylinder latch that must be pressed in to release the cylinder. We had no real preferences in cylinder-latch operation, all worked well. The Ruger seemed to be the most modern revolver, with less to go wrong. The Ruger cylinder rotated in Smith & Wesson fashion. The sights were good, broad shapes well suited to personal defense. The front sight was pinned into place and may be replaced if desired.

The Ruger was handled and safely dry fired, along with the other revolvers, before heading to the range. The Ruger had a different feel to the action. It was sturdy but not as smooth as the Smith & Wesson revolvers. The heavy barrel was a plus. There was a spring-loaded pin in the crane that aids in locking the cylinder tight. This is a Ruger design that we feel adds to the accuracy of some Ruger handguns, such as the Ruger GP100. It was nice to have in the compact SP101 as well.

During firing strings, the Ruger was much more comfortable to fire than the Colt and was as comfortable to fire as either Smith & Wesson revolver, though some felt the larger Smith & Wesson with its Safariland grips was easier to shoot well. During the combat course, the Ruger did well, with results we rated better than the Colt. It was close to the heavier target-sighted Model 19. The Smith & Wesson Military and Police outshot the Ruger SP101, in our estimation.

We fired the Ruger with the Cor-Bon 110-grain defense load and came to a surprising conclusion. The short, stout Ruger was more controllable than the larger Smith & Wesson Model 19. Grip design has a lot to do with this, but the Ruger was simply more comfortable to fire with Magnum loads due to its geometry and design.

Firing from a solid benchrest firing position, the Ruger SP101 proved accurate enough for any foreseeable chore. It was more accurate than the Colt. The Ruger lagged behind each Smith & Wesson revolver for accuracy. This is to be expected considering the advantages of the target-sighted Model 19 and the longer-barreled Military and Police revolver.

Our Team Said: We rated the Ruger down a grade because it had only a five-shot capacity versus six shots in the others, a sizable edge for a home-defense firearm. We demoted it another half grade on accuracy.

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

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VALUE GUIDE: RECENT REVOLVER RANKINGS

GUN NAME	ISSUE	GRADE	COMMENTS
Taurus Public Defender Polymer M4510PLYFS 410/45 LC, $514	Oct. 2016	A-	The Public Defender offers versatility along with good accuracy.
Charter Arms Bulldog Classic Model 34431 44 Special, $436	Oct. 2016	B-	The Bulldog had good accuracy for such a small revolver. The wood grip fit was loose.
Charter Arms Pitbull Model 64520 45 ACP, $509	Oct. 2016	D	The Pitbull had a good finish and functioned as expected, but the barrel was not fully seated.
Charter Arms Off Duty 3811 38 Special, $404	June 2016	A-	The Off Duty started off with a gritty trigger but soon slicked up.
Rossi Model R35102 38 Special +P, $390	June 2016	B	Best trigger and the most comfortable and largest grip. Spurred hammer could get hung up.
Rock Island Armory Model 206 51289 38 Special, $320	June 2016	B-	The Model 206 gave good accuracy for a DAO revolver; the grip was dated.
Ruger LCR Model 5456 9mm Luger, $532	March 2016	A-	Buttery-smooth trigger. Grip design stands out from traditional snub-nose revolvers. Light weight.
Taurus 905 Model 905SS2 9mm Luger, $528	March 2016	B	The 905 was faster to reload than a traditional 38 Special and performed well.
Smith & Wesson Model 325PD 45 ACP, $700-$925	July 2015	B-	The 325PD makes sense if you need a hideout revolver chambered in 45 ACP.
Smith & Wesson PC M625-10 45 ACP, $1200-$1400	July 2015	F	A cracked frame forced us to eliminate it from consideration for safety reasons.
Smith & Wesson PC M627 170133 357 Magnum, $1079	April 2015	A	Well-made, nice-shooting revolver. Ball-detent lock up, chamfered chambers, excellent sights.
S&W Model 686 357 Magnum, $600-$850 (Used)	April 2015	A	Well-designed six-shot revolver. Testers liked the slender 686 even though it had less capacity.
S&W Performance Center M327 170245 357 Mag, $1309	April 2015	B	Needed a different grip to be concealed carried. Short ejector rod hindered fast reloads.
FN Barracuda 357 Magnum 3-inch, $450-$750 (Used)	March 2015	B+	On the edge of “snubbie.” Would have moved up a grade if the 9mm cylinder had been included.
Smith & Wesson PC M629-8 44 Magnum, $900-$1000	Nov. 2014	A	Ported 3-inch barrel, compact grip made this a concealable N-frame our testers really liked.
S&W M329PD Alaska Backpacker IV150545 44 Mag, $750-$900	Nov. 2014	B	Most pleasant of the 44 Magnums to shoot; nice compromise of weight and firepower.
Smith & Wesson PC M657-5 41 Magnum, $750-$850	Nov. 2014	B	A snappy shooter in 41 Magnum, its 2.6-inch barrel showed less recoil than the 44 Magnums.

Log on to **Gun-Tests.com** to read complete reviews of these products in the designated months. Highly-ranked products from older reviews are often available used at substantial discounts.

Mid-Caliber Bolt-Action Rifles From T-C, Browning, CZ USA

Could these purported tack-drivers hit small critters in the next holler? Range time would tell the tale when we shot these 22-250 Rem., 243 Win., and 6.5 Grendel chamberings.

Recently, we assembled a panel and arrived at what could be described as a list of practical considerations for choosing an all-around rifle. Not a specialty piece, mind you, but a "daily driver," so to speak. Our test team came up with three considerations we wanted: power, accuracy, and portability. We agreed that in terms of power, we'd like to be able to hunt at least some deer-sized animals, but not with so much power that the rifle was too heavy to carry or generate so much recoil that it was unpleasant to shoot. To us, this meant short-action calibers greater than 223 Remington but less than 308 Winchester. In terms of accuracy, it wasn't long ago that producing a 1-inch group at 100 yards (1 minute of angle) was a high standard. Certainly 1 MOA is still a benchmark, but recent state-of-the-art machinery has made it possible to buy such guns over the counter. And last, but certainly not least, there's portability. Today, that is just as likely to mean aboard an ATV as it is over the shoulder. Either way, slender and compact is still the desired profile. Thus, the focus of this test became four bolt-fed short-action rifles in medium or midrange cartridges. The lineup was as follows:

- We had intended to keep the maximum length of our rifles to less than 40 inches, but we decided to include the 41.5-inch-long Thompson Center Compass because we were eager to find out if this $399 rifle chambered for 22-250 Remington had recovered since its sudden recall for safety issues. Adding to its appeal was its threaded barrel, ready for a suppressor or muzzle brake.
- Our shortest rifle was also chambered for 22-250. The $859 Browning X-Bolt Micro Midas offered a Grade 1 satin-finish walnut stock with 12.5-inch length of pull and about one additional inch of stock spacers. The Micro also weighed the least, as little as 6.1 pounds unloaded.
- In the middle we chose the newest model 557 from CZ USA. The Sporter Short Action chambered for 243 Winchester was perhaps the most traditional rifle, with a checkered walnut stock.
- The least traditional rifle, at least in terms of appearance, was the Howa Mini Action rifle from Legacy Sports International. Its multi-cam finish, 6.5 Grendel chambering, and 10-round detachable box magazine set it apart from the others. The right size overall, we hoped the big magazine sticking out the bottom would not make the Howa too difficult to pack.

How We Tested

Testing was performed using sandbag support from atop the benches found along the 100-yard line at American Shooting Centers in Houston. Backed by towering berms, ASC is the centerpiece of sprawling George Bush Park. For optics, we utilized both a 40mm Leupold scope offering 4.5-14X magnification and a 44mm 3.5-10X Zeiss Conquest scope, depending on which was a better fit for our different rifles. Unlike



The Thompson Center Compass may not be much to look at, but its $399 price tag wasn't the only thing that stood out. Chambered for 22-250 Remington, our Compass not only outshot the competition at half the price (or more), but also produced 5-shot groups measuring between 0.6 inches and 0.8 inches across all shots fired from the 100-yard line. The Compass was also the only rifle in our test roster with a threaded barrel for attaching a brake or suppressor.



Even after mounting a 10X scope with target knobs on it, the $860 Browning Micro Midas rifle was still small enough to fit inside a compact drag bag. We didn't quite break the 1-MOA barrier with the Micro Midas, but came close enough to encourage us to look for more amenable factory rounds or develop our own loads for 22-250 Remington. A handsome, refined rifle that was quick to the shoulder and cycled like lightning, portability was yet another strong point. Big enough (or small enough) for every member of the family, this is a good bet for an everyday rifle.

tests of standard hunting rifles in which we sometimes use three-shot groups, we demanded accuracy across five shots here. Test rounds were chosen from Black Hills Ammunition, Hornady, Sellier & Bellot, and Wolf, with as wide a range of bullet weight as we could find. Here is what we learned about these rifles.

Thompson Center Compass No. 10071 22-250 Rem., $399

We became aware of the recall on the Compass rifle almost before we had a chance to open the box. So back it went to T-C, or rather its parent company Smith & Wesson. Little more than two weeks later, the rifle was back in our possession at no charge for shipping in either direction. The recall was triggered by concerns, according to the maker, that "there may be some instances, depending on the height and position of the rifle and other factors, where a chambered round may fire if the firearm is dropped with the safety in the fire position." We're not sure what conditions could cause this to happen, but we did try slamming the buttstock on the floor repeatedly in an effort to get the trigger to release without the safety engaged. (Great buttpad, by the way). We also tried smashing the rifle from the front, into the muzzle, but the firing pin stayed put throughout this abuse, so we're pretty sure the problem had been fixed. Before smashing the muzzle on a carpeted slab floor, we took care to protect the crown by backing off the thread cap. The cap had a checkered surface for grip and could indeed be removed by hand. Inside the barrel of the Compass was the maker's patented 5R rifling, designed to limit bullet deformation as it's forced through the barrel. The barreled action was free floated, using pillar bedding. The synthetic stock offers an integrated trigger guard, an extended cheek plate that favors the right-handed

22-250 REMINGTON RANGE DATA

Black Hills 22-250 Rem. 36-gr. Varmint Grenade	**Thompson-Center Compass**	**Browning X-Bolt Micro Midas**
Average Velocity	3637 fps	3630 fps
Muzzle Energy	1057 ft.-lbs.	1053 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	0.7 in.	1.1 in.
Black Hills 22-250 Rem. 50-gr. Hornady V-Max	**Thompson Center Compass**	**Browning X-Bolt Micro Midas**
Average Velocity	3430 fps	3371 fps
Muzzle Energy	1306 ft.-lbs.	1261 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	0.8 in.	1.2 in.
Sellier & Bellot 22-250 Rem. 55-gr. SBT	**Thompson Center Compass**	**Browning X-Bolt Micro Midas**
Average Velocity	3517 fps	3443 fps
Muzzle Energy	1511 ft.-lbs.	1448 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	0.6 in.	1.5 in.

To collect accuracy data for all the rifles, we fired five-shot groups from a sandbag rest using various optics. Distance: 100 yards. We recorded velocities using a CED M2 chronograph, with the first sky screen set 10 feet from the muzzle.

243 WINCHESTER RANGE DATA

Black Hills Gold 80-gr. GMX	**CZ USA 557 Sporter Short Action**
Average Velocity	2916 fps
Muzzle Energy	1510 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	0.7 in.
Black Hills Gold 95-gr. Hornady SST	**CZ USA 557 Sporter Short Action**
Average Velocity	2748 fps
Muzzle Energy	1593 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	1.3 in.
Hornady American White Tail 100-gr. Interlock	**CZ USA 557 Sporter Short Action**
Average Velocity	2717 fps
Muzzle Energy	1639 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	1.0 in.

6.5 GRENDEL RANGE DATA

Hornady 123-gr. A-Max	**Howa Mini Action**
Average Velocity	2501 fps
Muzzle Energy	1708 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	1.0 in.
American Eagle 120-gr. OTM	**Howa Mini Action**
Average Velocity	2543 fps
Muzzle Energy	1723 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	1.2 in.
Wolf 100-gr. FMJ	**Howa Mini Action**
Average Velocity	2634 fps
Muzzle Energy	1540 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	1.5 in.

THOMPSON CENTER COMPASS NO. 10071
22-250 REMINGTON, $399
GUN TESTS GRADE: A

Simple, straightforward, and inexpensive. Delivered sub-minute-of-angle groups with all rounds tested.



Action Type	Bolt, 3 lugs	Stock	Black composite
Overall Length	41.0 in.	Bedding	Pillar
Barrel Length/Twist	22.0 in., 1:12 in.	Buttplate	Rubber, adj. cant
Overall Height w/o Scope	7.0 in.	Length of Pull	13.25 in.
Weight Unloaded	6.9 lbs.	Receiver Scope-Base Pattern	Weaver
Weight Loaded	7.25 lbs.	Trigger Pull Weight	4.75 lbs., adjustable
Sight Radius	NA	Safety	3-position lever
Action	Blued Steel	Warranty	Lifetime
Barrel	Blued Steel	Telephone	(800) 331-0852
Magazine Capacity	5 Rounds	Website	TCArms.com
Magazine Type	Detachable rotary box	Made In	U.S.A.



The barrel of the $399 Thompson Center Compass rifle was threaded and capped, making it a more versatile rifle. The checkered thread cap fit securely, but was removable by hand.



Two distinct detent points are visible on the stalk of the safety lever, producing click positions for safe-on, bolt locked; safe-on bolt free; and fire. The tactical-styled bolt knob accented an otherwise plain black rifle.



The stock was black composite with only minor molded-in ridges to aid grip. Also, the butt has a traditional-style cheekpiece for right-handed shooters and a 0.75-inch-thick rubber recoil pad. Dual sling swivel studs complete the package.



The bedding system inside the Compass's barebones composite stock are dual aluminum pillars and a secured steel recoil lug.

shooter, and sling studs front and rear. The magazine was removable and designed to fit flush. The release was secure, yet easy to reach.

The trigger-pull weight settled in at about 4.75 pounds after break in, losing about one-third pound since its first shots. A little mushy at first, the trigger did improve with use. Trigger-pull weight was adjustable, but the process was more complex than simply turning a screw. After removing the action, adjustments are made by manipulating three different nuts. One nut modifies tension; another locks said adjustment in place; and a third sets overtravel. Tools required include a small screwdriver and two thin quarter-inch open-end wrenches. The owner's manual also suggests the use of clear nail polish to lock the adjustments. Taking almost three pages in the manual, adjusting the trigger would require a healthy dose of patience and some mechanical savvy, in our view.

If the stock was plain and understated, the bolt handle offered a contemporary tactical look. Bolt lift was short, describing an arc such as between 4 o'clock and 2 o'clock. A cocking indicator showed through a round hole on each side at the rear of the bolt shroud, with a three-position safety lever above. Fully rearward, the safety lever seized the trigger and locked down the bolt handle. With the lever pushed forward so that it was perpendicular to the bore, the bolt could be manipulated to empty the chamber with the trigger remaining locked. The bolt was released by pushing in a lever located along the left side of the action.

Two sections of plain Weaver mount were supplied and already mounted in the drilled-and-tapped receiver. Thankfully, Loctite had not yet been used on the mounting screws, because initial scope mounting seemed to show bias to the left as detected by a Wheeler Pro Laser Boresighter (Btibrands.com 580022, $175). Using a set of Sleeved Scope Alignment Rods (Brownells 080-918-000WB, $65) and a pair of Zeiss rings that had previously

been trued, we brought the unit into alignment and arrived at the range just an inch or two low at 100 yards.

While Thompson hasn't become a household word for their bolt-action rifles, T-C just about owns the world of handgun steel silhouette shooting, so we looked forward to accurate results. However, we quickly discovered a major flaw. As returned from the manufacturer, our 22-250 chambered rifle was supplied with a magazine with very small numbers reading 204, 223/5.56. We were, however, able to fire the rifle by coaxing the Compass to allow us to feed rounds singly over the top of the magazine. Of course, we immediately called the manufacturer to order the proper magazine so we could continue our tests.

Despite the mix up on the magazine and having to be a little more patient with the trigger, the Thompson Center Compass was the only rifle in the test to deliver sub-MOA groups with all three choices of ammunition. Our test shooters agreed that the actual measurements could have been mixed and matched to the different rounds, give or take a blink of the eye or a gust of wind.

Our Team Said: The Thompson Center Compass made shooting tight groups look easy. The possibility of adding a suppressor for quieting highly effective rounds like the Black Hills Varmint Grenade makes us want to go hunting ASAP. The barrel was obviously better than its bargain price. We'd be willing to pay a little more for further refinement.

Browning X-Bolt Micro Midas No. 035346209 22-250 Remington, $860

One of the ways to make a rifle handier is to make it smaller. One way to make a rifle smaller is reduce the length and breadth of the stock. Another is to attach a shorter barrel and utilize a short action. The Browning X-Bolt Micro Midas essentially uses two out of three such methods, unless you consider a 20-inch barrel to be short. The smaller stock helped the Japanese-made Micro Midas measure about one full inch less top to bottom than our other rifles and length of pull was just 12.5 inches. Three spacers measuring about 0.275 inches each can be added to increase length of

BROWNING X-BOLT MICRO MIDAS NO. 035346209 22-250 REMINGTON, $860

GUN TESTS GRADE: B+

This is a super-handy rifle for the whole family, and it can fit just about anywhere. However, accuracy lagged behind the much cheaper T-C.



Action Type	Bolt, 3 lugs	Stock	Black walnut
Overall Length (Min./Max.)	38.375 to 39.175 in.	Bedding	Pillar
Barrel Length/Twist	20.0 in.; 1:9 in.	Buttplate	Rubber, adjustable
Overall Height w/o Scope	5.9 in.	Length of Pull (Min./Max.)	12.5 to 13.3 in.
Weight Unloaded	6.1 lbs.	Receiver Scope-Base Pattern	Drilled and tapped
Weight Loaded	6.5 lbs.	Trigger Pull Weight	4.15 lbs.
Sight Radius	NA	Safety	2-position tang
Action Finish	Matte Blue Steel	Warranty	None written
Barrel Finish	Matte Blue Steel	Telephone	(800) 333-3288
Magazine Capacity	4 Rounds	Website	Browning.com
Magazine Type	Detachable rotary, flush fit	Made In	Japan



We used Browning's integrated rings by Talley to guarantee alignment and make short work of mounting a scope.



The stock of our Browning Micro Midas was reduced in length of pull and also from top to bottom. The efficient butt pad made up for the smaller footprint. Three spacers were provided for adding almost one additional inch to the buttstock's length of pull.



The Browning Micro Midas utilized a two-position tang-mounted safety. Note the silver tab (left arrow) to the rear of the bolt, signifying the action is cocked. A rectangular panel is shown protruding at the top of the bolt stem (right arrow). When the safety is activated, the bolt can be still be manipulated to empty the chamber by depressing this button.

CZ USA 557 SPORTER SHORT ACTION NO. 04806
243 WINCHESTER, $792
GUN TESTS GRADE: B+

The 557's refined looks belied its rugged durability, but its heavier weight did not seem to tame recoil. May only need a more effective buttpad.



Action Type	Bolt, 2 lugs	Stock	American style, Turkish Walnut
Overall Length	40.0 in.	Bedding	Recoil lug
Barrel Length/Twist	20.5 in.; 1:10 in.	Buttplate	Fixed rubber
Overall Height w/o Scope	6.9 in.	Length of Pull (standard/set)	13.75 in.
Weight Unloaded	7.1 lbs.	Receiver Scope-Base Pattern	19mm Dovetail
Weight Loaded	7.6 lbs.	Trigger Pull Weight	3.75 lbs.
Sight Radius	NA	Safety	2 position lever
Action Finish	Blued Steel	Warranty	1 year on wood, 5 years mechanical
Barrel Finish	Blued Steel	Telephone	(800) 955-4486
Magazine Capacity	4 Rounds	Website	CZ-USA.com
Magazine Type	Detachable, flush fit	Made In	Czech Republic



The CZ 557 Short Action rifle offered 19mm dovetails designed to fit CZ's proprietary rings. The dedicated rearward ring sported a recoil lug, assuring that it won't be moving under recoil. The top loop of each ring showed a vertical score line to make sure they were mounted the right way. The slotted crossbolts were plenty secure, but testers worried about marring the tiny ring screws with a flat-head screwdriver. Thankfully, the slots were unusually deep. By using a thin-blade screwdriver, there was little danger of the blade skipping across the screw head.



The CZ 557's magazine release was located inside the front of the trigger guard.



The CZ 557 action was built for maximum strength. Rather than cut a hole in the side of the action to mount a bolt release, CZ provided a small lever, almost hidden by the bolt itself (left arrow). At right is the safety knob.

pull, if desired. Even at maximum length, we liked the way in which the Micro Midas was willing to fit into small spaces.

Despite weighing about one pound less than the other rifles, the Micro offered protection from recoil thanks to its forward balance, provided by a barrel that was anything but thin. The walnut stock offered lots of useful checkering, wrapping around the forend and along the sides of the pistol grip. The rubber buttpad did a very good job of absorbing recoil, despite having a slightly smaller footprint. Sling studs were provided front and rear. We think the stock was neutral for left-handed shooters, but a dedicated left-hand action model limited to 243, 7mm-08, and 308 chamberings is also available. Besides these calibers, Browning chambers the right-hand Micro Midas for 300 WSM, 270 WSM, and, of course, 22-250 in our test rifle.

One might expect the X-Bolt to work via four lugs to describe an "X" shape, but there were only three. Bolt throw was from about 5 o'clock to just a hair above 4 o'clock. A sliver tab appeared at the bottom of the bolt when the action was cocked, and the safety was a two-position design located on the tang directly behind the bolt channel. Bolt release was by depressing a lever located on the left side of the action. The release worked easily, and returning the bolt to the receiver only required sliding it into the channel. The Browning bolt action was smooth, even when rounds were loaded one at a time over the top of the magazine.

Scope mounting was simple and precise thanks to Browning's X-Bolt Integrated Scope Mount system (Browning #12501, $70). In this system, both the front and rear rings were integrated with a stanchion that bolted directly to the drilled-and-tapped receiver. Constructed using 7000-series aluminum by Talley, we chose from three different heights. The X-Bolt Integrated Scope Mount system is available for both 1-inch and 30mm-tube scopes.

Trigger-pull weight measured a

steady 4.15 pounds. The feel was like pressing against a solid object, followed by a sudden break without any grit, take up, or creep. But at the range, the X-bolt was not as accurate as the other rifles. We did come close to averaging 1-MOA firing Black Hills 36-grain Varmint Grenade ammunition, but the Black Hills 50-grain V-Max rounds lagged by almost one-quarter inch on average. The Sellier & Bellot rounds produced 5-shot groups that measured 1.5 inches across, with little variation. Certainly, there are more rounds of 22-250 to choose from, but if our results tell us anything, the Micro Midas prefers lighter bullets of modern construction.

Our Team Said: We can't believe we're complaining about a 1.1-MOA rifle, especially when it covered all the bases our test team had openly expressed. The Micro Midas is a bolt-action rifle that fits into a small space, was fast into action, cycled quickly even when top loaded, and didn't beat us up. Given the overall package and the visual appeal, we think it's worth the time to test more factory ammunition or develop a handload to break the 1-MOA barrier in this rifle.

CZ USA 557 Sporter Short Action No. 04806 243 Winchester, $792

The heaviest rifle in our test group was the CZ 557 Sporter Short Action chambered for 243 Winchester. The extra weight could be attributed to the substantial Turkish walnut stock with oil finish, or perhaps the extra steel atop the action machined to offer 19mm dovetails. But keep in mind that the 557 Short Action was originally designed to function as a compact 308 Win., which is also available (#04805, $792). Perhaps that's why the action was noticeably bulkier and wider than on our other rifles. Considering the 243 version shares the same CNC machined-billet action, this rifle should be plenty durable.

Shouldering the CZ found the stock to be neutral for left- or right-handed shooters. Checkering appeared at the pistol grip and along the sides, but not underneath the forend. Sling studs were supplied, and a thin

LEGACY SPORTS HOWA MINI ACTION NO. HMA90622MCC+ 6.5 GRENDEL, $855

GUN TESTS GRADE: C

This otherwise top-grade rifle was spoiled by weak magazine retention. It was difficult to keep the mag from dropping free.



Action Type	Bolt, 2 lugs	Buttstock	Camouflage Composite
Overall Length	39.5 in.	Bedding	Pillars
Barrel Length/Twist	20.0 in.; 1:8 in.	Buttplate	Rubber
Overall Height w/o Scope	6.9 in.	Length of Pull	13.9 in.
Weight Unloaded	6.4 lbs.	Receiver Scope-Base Pattern	Weaver
Weight Loaded (123 grain)	6.9 lbs.	Trigger Pull Weight	3.6 lbs.
Sight Radius	NA	Safety	3-position lever
Action Finish	Parkerized Steel	Warranty	None written
Barrel Finish	Parkerized Steel	Telephone	(775) 828-0555
Magazine Capacity	10 Rounds	Website	LegacySports.com
Magazine Type	Detachable box	Made In	Japan



The supplied 10-round magazine fed smoothly, but the detent on the release spring was weak. Together with an oversized release lever located in front of the magazine well, it was difficult to keep the magazine from accidentally dropping free.



The bolt release on the left-hand side of the stock (left arrow) and the three-position safety on the right (right arrow) were not fancy, but worked flawlessly nonetheless. The action was drilled and tapped for Leupold-pattern mounts.



Our Howa Mini Action was chambered for 6.5 Grendel ammunition, top. The success of the larger 6.5 Creedmoor, bottom, is doing a lot for all cartridges that begin with "6.5." The .264-caliber offerings are increasingly popular.



On the CZ's proprietary rings, all seemed secure and strong, but we worried about marring the single-slot ring screws.

rubber buttpad with pronounced toe was in place behind a 0.20-inch-thick spacer. The trigger guard and magazine well were machined from a single block of aluminum. The detachable steel magazine was robust and held four rounds in a staggered column. The magazine basepad was polymer and protruded about 0.30 inches, but its contour was smoothly integrated and not likely to snag or interfere with steadying the rifle upon a tree limb or mechanical rest. The seal between magazine and rifle was tight, and accidental release was most unlikely because the release lever was located inside the forward arc of the trigger guard.

As delivered, the trigger was quite pleasing, but further adjustment was available by turning separate Allen wrench screws for pre-travel, trigger weight, and overtravel. The pre-travel adjustment screw was visible at the top of the long arcing trigger. Access to the overtravel and press weight screws required removing the action from the stock. We did not adjust the trigger from its 3.75-pound factory setting.

Removing the polished bolt required pressing down on the edge of a thin lever that was barely visible, partially obscured by the bolt itself. Perhaps the reason why the bolt release did not consist of a bigger lever mounted in a cutout along the upper portion of the receiver (such as was the case of our other rifles) was to avoid removing material and maintain maximum strength.

With the top of the receiver machined to accept CZ's proprietary rings, alignment was assured. Unlike other makers, the CZ rings utilize slotted-screw heads for both the crossbolts and the rings themselves. The big crossbolts were quick to tighten, but some testers complained how easy it was to mar the heads of the four tiny ring screws. Inspection of the small screws showed an unusually deep channel. In this case, using a screwdriver that was thin enough to go all the way down into the slot was more important than a screwdriver blade that filled the slot all the way across.

At the range, we found that heat buildup was a concern for the CZ 557 Short Action rifle, specifically when firing heavier bullets. As the heat increased, the likelihood of flyers increased, especially after the first three rounds. This shouldn't be a problem for deer hunters, and, indeed, the 100-grain Hornady American White Tail ammunition produced 1.0-inch groups on average when the rifle was allowed to cool. The Black Hills 95-grain Hornady SST seemed to generate the most heat. But when firing the Black Hills Gold 80-grain GMX ammunition, the CZ 557 seemed all but impervious to heat, producing 5-shot groups that measured about 0.7 inches across for all shots fired.



The $789 CZ Sporter Short Action 557 chambered for 243 Winchester was originally designed as a 308 Win. Heavily built, it transmitted enough recoil to make prolonged shooting uncomfortable. We think the buttpad was inadequate and may have even have served to magnify recoil. In terms of accuracy, this rifle was at its best loaded with Black Hills Gold 80-grain GMX rounds.



This is a good-looking buttpad on the 557 rifle, but it was not an efficient buttpad. The toe of the CZ 557 seemed to be the worst offender in producing recoil we didn't like. We would hate to see the manufacturer cut away any of the fine walnut stock, but making room for a thicker buttpad would likely have made our test session a lot more enjoyable.

Our Team Said: This is a beautifully finished firearm, and it expresses much of what one expects from a traditional bolt-action rifle. Its 308 Winchester heritage was evident in the girth of its receiver. Feeding felt sticky at times, but this could change as the magazine spring settles or the interior polishes itself. A different magazine might have fed more smoothly or pointed the finger elsewhere. Our biggest complaint was the pointed toe of the rubber butt pad that seemed to magnify recoil. We'd trim it down. The width and contour of the heel was fine, but overall we'd rather the rifle had a more shock-absorbent pad.

Legacy Sports Howa Mini Action No. HMA90622MCC+ 6.5 Grendel, $855

Given the performance of 6.5 Creedmoor rifles reviewed in our January 2016 issue, we'd say that manufacturers are fully justified in jumping on the .264-caliber bandwagon. So when we found out that Legacy Sports of Reno, Nevada was importing bolt-action rifles chambered for 6.5 Grendel, we had to try it out. Although the parent case of the Creedmoor is actually different from that of the much shorter Grendel, there are still enough similarities so that 6.5 Grendel could be thought of as the Creedmoor's little brother. Key to this offering is the



We found a lot to like about the $855 Howa Mini Action rifle chambered for 6.5 Grendel. The word natural comes to mind when describing the trigger, bolt action, and overall handling. Certainly the Multicam stock was eye catching, and it proved to be highly mar resistant, too. While 6.5 Grendel was designed for use in semi-automatic rifles, the short, trim bolt seemed to be up to the task of quick manual cycling. The entire package seemed to be on its way to hitting a home run, until it became evident that magazine retention was an ongoing problem.



The Howa Mini Action sports a bolt (top) almost one full inch shorter than the company's own standard short action. The intention of this design was to speed cycling. But Browning's Micro Midas bolt was almost exactly the same length as the Mini. The Browning's bolt was heavier, but we think the Micro Midas was nevertheless the fastest-cycling rifle in our test group.

Japanese-made Howa Mini Action, featuring a bolt that is some 12% shorter. Specifically, the Mini Action bolt measures 6.0 inches in length, compared to Howa's own Short-action bolt, which is about 6.9 inches long. Given that 6.5 Grendel was designed for semi-automatic fire (specifically for the AR-15), why not find a way to speed up manual operation as well? The Mini Action rifle is also chambered for 204 Ruger, 222 and 223 Remington. A 7.62x39mm chambering is also planned.

Housed in a synthetic stock, available colors included black and dark earth, plus coatings of Kryptek camouflage and our choice, Multicam. We also picked the 20-inch heavy-contour barrel over the 20-inch lightweight, or 22-inch-long standard-profile barrels. There is also a package rifle version including a Nikko Stirling PanaMax scope, but we had the Howa Mini shipped with two-piece Weaver bases instead.

Opening the box, we were enthusiastic. The Multicam stock looked great and proved to be highly mar resistant. The buttpad was soft, too, measuring nearly 1 inch in thickness.

The trigger, weighing in at about 3.6 pounds, felt smooth and natural. The bolt's action was light and trouble free. The bolt stem was flattened to hide within the stock relief with little more than the bolt knob sticking out. The safety and bolt-release levers were made from sheet steel. Not what we'd call refined, but more likely to bend than break and rugged enough, in our view. The bolt release had a short forward and down movement, and the safety had three click positions for fire, safe-on bolt active, and the complete lockdown of trigger and bolt. The polymer trigger guard was integrated with the magazine well, including the magazine release lever and catch. A five-round magazine is also available, and like the supplied 10-round 6.5 Grendel magazine, it will also accommodate 7.62x39mm ammunition.

Feeding from the 10-round magazine was quick and sure, indicating that there may indeed be something to the Mini Action design. Searching for 6.5 Grendel ammunition, we found only five different varieties for sale on sites like Ammoseek.com. We tested with three. Wolf's 100-grain FMJ rounds were capable of producing 1.5-inch groups on average. American Eagle 120-grain OTM rounds averaged about 1.2 inches across, and Hornady's 123-grain A-Max rounds helped the Mini to gain a 1-MOA group.

One of the characteristics we were looking for was portability, so in this case a five-round magazine would have been more in line with our desires. Yet the lure of high capacity definitely has its appeal. No matter how short the magazine, the release was simply too easy to activate. The lever was larger than it needed to be, and it appeared in a vulnerable position. In addition, the detent provided by the operating spring was weak. At the bench (never mind walking through the woods), all we had to do is push the rifle forward on the sandbag and the lever would drop the magazine on contact. No matter what your opinion is on detachable box magazines (such as they get in the way, they can hold more ammo, the rifle can be reloaded faster, or they're just too easy to lose), the Howa's magazine release needed to be more secure.

Our Team Said: This is a fun gun to shoot. The only real problem, in our view, was lack of integrity in retaining the magazine. We could see filing down the magazine-release lever and installing a much heavier spring. But this is, after all, an $855 rifle, and it should be up to the maker, not the buyer, to deliver a finished product. Past that, the Mini Action is great pick.

Written and photographed by Roger Eckstine, using evaluations from Gun Tests team testers. **GT**

357 Magnum Personal Defense Loads: Black Hills Is a Best Buy

The company's 125-grain JHP comes 50 rounds to the box at an attractive price, exhibits modest recoil, and maintains near-ideal penetration with good expansion and 100% weight retention.

When it comes to the 357 Magnum cartridge, the consensus is the round is a great performer. The cartridge has taken deer, bears, and even larger game. However, the rub is that these exploits were made with larger revolvers, often 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.

The slow-burning powder used in Magnum loads is often a canister grade of Winchester 296 or Hodgdon H 110. This powder develops its power and velocity from a slower burn. Purpose-designed defense loads must use relatively faster-burning powder, usually a powder in the middle range. Another problem with accuracy and consistent performance is bullet pull. The lighter bullets used in defense loads often do not show as consistent a powder burn as heavier bullets, and this limits velocity with 100- to 110-grain bullets. However, makers such as Cor-Bon seem to have perfected a loading process that has solved many of the problems with bullet pull and have even gotten a consistent powder burn in short barrels. More pertinent in recent years, the Magnum has been downloaded. In present form, SAAMI specs restrict 357 Magnum pressure levels to about the same as 9mm +P+ loads.

When you consider the flash, blast, and recoil inherent in the Magnum cartridge, the question must be asked: Is the 357 Magnum the best choice for personal defense over other revolver cartridges? We believe it is. The Magnum offers excellent performance in a relatively compact package that the big-bore revolvers cannot match for speed and packing ability. The Magnum is superior to the 38 Special, no matter how hot the Special is loaded.



With dedication and practice, the 357 Magnum is a formidable handgun with an excellent track record in personal defense.



From bottom, the three 125-grain loads from Black Hills, Hornady and Buffalo Bore got solid rankings. The 140-grain Hornady FTX on top had a lot of recoil, which got it marked down by our testers.

In the May 2012 issue, we looked at the 357 Magnum for animal defense and also have looked at the 9mm versus the 357 Magnum. In this report, we are looking at the 357 Magnum solely as a personal-defense cartridge and letting the Magnum stand on its own.

There are several concerns in choosing the 357 Magnum for personal defense. One of our raters has a great deal of police experience. He noted that the 22 LR, as an example, was a proven, though under-regarded, self-defense round when fired from a rifle largely because of the ease with which accuracy was obtained. From a pistol, the results are often dismal, so the shorter-barrel, lighter revolvers might also produce poor results. Another concern is muzzle blast. The concussion inside a home could be severe, the muzzle blast is tremendous in dim light, and sometimes the flash causes night blindness. The Magnum might literally leave you deaf and dumb. However, some modern loads are especially treated to create only light muzzle flash, and as a result, they are much better suited to personal defense. If you choose a heavy hunting load and fire it in a 4-inch barrel, you will probably experience excess muzzle blast. If you use the 110-grain Cor-Bon personal-defense load, you will not experience this excess muzzle blast. The Buffalo Bore 125-grain Tactical load is another excellent choice, carefully tailored to personal defense.

357 MAGNUM LOAD PERFORMANCE DATA

Gun: Smith & Wesson Model 66 with 4-inch barrel	Average Velocity (fps)	Muzzle Energy (ft.-lbs.)	Average Accuracy (in.)	Power Factor (pf)	Expanded Width (in.)	Retained Weight (gr.)	Penetration In Water (in.)
Cor-Bon 100-gr. Pow'RBall	1433	456	2.0	143	FRAG	60/60%	9
Cor-Bon 110-gr. JHP	1373	460	1.3	151	0.66	107/97%	15
Winchester 110-gr. JHP	1260	388	1.8	139	FRAG	70/64%	9
Black Hills 125-gr. JHP	1370	520	0.9	171	0.72	125/100%	14
Buffalo Bore 125-gr. TAC	1293	464	1.3	162	0.73	125/100%	14
Hornady 125-gr. FTX	1318	482	1.3	165	0.72	125/100%	12
Federal 130-gr. Hydra-Shok	1480	632	1.0	192	FRAG	78/60%	10
Buffalo Bore 140-gr. TAC	1243	480	1.0	174	0.73	140/100%	16
Hornady 140-gr. FTX	1380	592	1.2	193	0.64	140/100%	17
Winchester 145-gr. Silvertip	1290	536	1.0	187	0.69	130/90%	16

Notes: *Average Velocity and standard deviation readings were obtained by firing four five-shot strings over a Competition Electronics Pro Chrono. Ambient temperature: 68 degrees. Elevation: 815 feet above sea level. ● The accuracy figures are the average of two five-shot groups. For accuracy, we fired the test gun from a benchrest at a 15-yard target. ● To calculate IPSC power factor, multiply bullet weight in grains by the velocity in fps, then divide by 1000. ● The retained-weight column shows the recovered bullet weight as a percentage of the actual bullet weight.*



Shown left to right are the Hornady Critical Defense 125-grain bullet, the Black Hills JHP, the Buffalo Bore 125-grain Barnes X bullet, the Buffalo Bore 140-grain Barnes bullet, and the Hornady FTX 140-grain bullet.

Recoil is another concern, and this is another reason that solving the issue of bullet pull with light bullets was so important. Developing lightweight bullets with good performance was critical, and the Barnes X bullet, the Hornady XTP, and the Speer Gold Dot are finally offering what shooters needed. The Magnum was designed for use in a large-frame revolver. These revolvers are heavy, bulky, and slow to put into action. The K-frame revolvers are probably ideal and a realistic minimum for control. However, modern designs with pistol grips that set the metal of the frame apart from the shooter's hand are able to make even light revolvers comfortable, or at least tolerable, although the ultralight wheelguns are very problematic when chambered in this caliber. You can make a light 357 Magnum revolver, but control is another matter. Those choosing the 357 Magnum cartridge tend to believe that a single hard hit is more important than a tight cluster of holes on the target.

A final concern, and a very important one, is penetration. The 357 Magnum with 158-grain JHP hunting loads, hollow point, not soft point, loads, will penetrate as far as 20 to 24 inches of water. Heavy soft points and lead semi-wadcutter loads will penetrate even more. Such penetration is needed for taking game animals. For this reason, and also due to training concerns in police work, the 38 Special was often seen as the urban load and the Magnum as the rural or highway-patrol load. The penetration of the Magnum is a liability in the city, and its abilities are wasted to an extent.

A great advantage of the Magnum that isn't always appreciated is its accuracy potential. A 4-inch-barrel Combat Magnum revolver with good ammunition is capable of making hits on a target well past 100 yards. Drop is minimal compared to most other handgun cartridges. The Magnum has many advantages for those living the rural life who may have to defend themselves against a rifle-armed opponent at longer range, or who may need to drop a coyote or feral dog on the property. In close-range personal defense, the Magnum's advantage is in terminal ballistics. The Magnum develops enough velocity to instigate expansion in a properly designed hollowpoint bullet.

Here are our results for 357 Magnum ammunition examined for home defense or self-defense carry. The test handgun was a Smith & Wesson Model 66 357 Magnum with a 4-inch barrel. Most of the ammunition was acquired locally in South Carolina, unless otherwise noted.

Black Hills 125-Grain JHP D357N2

Priced at $35.78 from MidwayUSA.com, the Black Hills load is packaged in a 50-round box at an attractive price, earning it the Best Buy nod. This load exhibits modest recoil for the performance, while maintaining penetration in the ideal range at 14 inches along with good expansion and 100% weight



retention. Velocity isn't at the top of the list, so this load is controllable in double-action pairs and offers all of the power most shooters will wish to handle in a 35-ounce revolver.

GUN TESTS GRADE: A & BEST BUY

Federal 130-Grain Hydra-Shok 357H52PDH

This is a heavy 357 Magnum load priced at $28.80/20. Velocity was greater than advertised, and this loading produced some 632 foot-pounds of energy. A colleague tested the same load and found it produced 1482 fps from his personal 3-inch-barrel revolver, while another reported 1271 fps from a 2-inch barrel. The Hydra-Shok offers greater penetration than the lighter loads although by only an inch, but the impact is tremendous and scattered the water jugs. Obviously, this is the strongest load, and then recoil is right at the edge of control.



GUN TESTS GRADE: A

Hornady 125-Grain FTX Critical Defense

This cost $30.35 per 20. Hornady has done its homework with this load. Expansion is a little different than conventional hollowpoint ammunition. The polymer tip really does seem to work, and in a number of tests in all calibers, the Critical Defense load has been very consistent. Accuracy has been good to excellent in all revolvers we have tested the load in, and the FTX bullet is very consistent in expansion. The Critical Defense load expands to a higher degree than some conventional bullets. Velocity was good, but not so much that it battered the shooter or the firearm. It should prove attractive for shooters who want a load that will expand even after meeting heavy clothing or bone.



GUN TESTS GRADE: A

Buffalo Bore 125-Grain Tactical Load

A box of this cost $37.80. We need to stress that this is the Tactical, not the full-power, Buffalo Bore load. The Tactical line is designed to offer good personal-defense performance with control. The Buffalo Bore Tactical is well balanced with good control, low flash, and good accuracy. The solid-copper Barnes bullet has a shank even when fully expanded. This probably means that load density and bullet pull are more manageable than in the past with conventional cup-and-core-type bullets.

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

Cor-Bon 110-Grain Jacketed Hollowpoint SD357110/20

Our price at MidwayUSA.com was $25/20 for this load. While pricier than the other lightweight loads and offered in a 20-round box, the Cor-Bon 110-grain JHP offered excellent performance. Recoil was modest and muzzle flash controlled. Accuracy was excellent. Cor-Bon wisely chose the Gold Dot bullet and loaded it for optimum performance and good control. Both penetration and expansion are ideal. Energy is a smashing 460 foot-pounds. All of the raters were enthusiastic about this loading. One rater who formerly did not trust lightweight bullets admitted that the 110-grain Cor-Bon loading offered better performance than the various 125-grain JHP loads he had previously deployed, but with less recoil and muzzle blast. This is a good choice for personal defense. Perhaps this is as close to an ideal loading for home and urban use as possible.

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

Winchester Silvertip 145-Grain X357SHP

We paid $34.50 for 50 rounds of this load. The Silvertip isn't that pricey when the 50-round box is considered. Accuracy was good, making the Silvertip a load that would serve well for all-around use, not only for personal defense, but also the occasional deer at moderate range as well. Accuracy cannot be faulted, and the balance of expansion and penetration favors penetration. This would be a good load for those facing attackers in heavy clothing. One of the raters has studied the issue extensively and noted that the heavier the opponent, the more the need for penetration and the greater the expansion that might be expected. The Silvertip is a hard kicker, but it's right for those favoring penetration.

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

Buffalo Bore 140-Grain Tactical Load

A box of this also cost $37.80. It isn't a misprint that the 140-grain load expanded to the same width as the 125-grain load, but also penetrated 2 inches deeper than the 125-grain load. The two loads produce about the same recoil, but most raters felt a bit more push with the heavy-bullet load. The heavier bullet is only about 50 fps slower than the 125-grain Buffalo Bore load. For personal defense, common wisdom tells us the 125-grain Tactical load would be the better choice, but here is a heavy-bullet load with excellent performance.

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

Cor-Bon 100-Grain Pow'RBall PB357100

We bought this round for $21.23 per 20 cartridges. Pow'RBall is a projectile designed to offer perfect feed reliability in self-loading pistols. However, the design also ensures expansion without the use of a hollow sump in the nose. Old-generation hollowpoint bullets would close up if they struck hard materials, while the Pow'RBall will always expand on impact. This was the lightest-recoiling load tested, was accurate enough, and had fragmentation that limited penetration. The performance profile is predictably very similar to a 9mm +P+, and those loads have excellent reputation.

GUN TESTS GRADE: B

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Winchester 110-Grain JHP Q4204

We purchased this round for $28.50 per 50 cartridges. This is a traditional 110-grain jacketed hollowpoint that is loaded lighter than the 125-grain load for greater control. Though it is another light-recoiling load, muzzle blast was greater than the Cor-Bon 110, we thought. The 110-grain JHP fragments, which is something a number of shooters admire, but we would like more penetration. This load fills a niche in the scheme of things for the recoil shy and hits harder than any 38 Special. In a 50-round box, the price is appealing.

GUN TESTS GRADE: B

Hornady 140-Grain FTX

Priced at $30.35 a box, this is really a long-barrel-handgun load, really better suited as a member of the LeveRevolution line. The 140-grain bullet demonstrated remarkable velocity for the weight, but we double-checked the chronograph, and we were getting a lot of horsepower out of this load. However, while penetration was on the long end, expansion wasn't that great. The expanded nose was really just bulged, although it was bulged consistently. This load is designed for use in a lever-action 357 Magnum carbine, so it understandably demonstrates more recoil than we like. The 125-grain FTX is a better choice for personal defense, in our view.

The 140-grain FTX showed remarkable velocity for the weight. After impact, the expanded nose was really just bulged.



GUN TESTS GRADE: B

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

COMING UP IN GUN TESTS

- Modern Compact 9mm Handguns: CZ 75 P01, a double-action first-shot pistol with a light rail and decocker; the CZ 75 D, the Tri-Star C 100, an affordable clone and copy of the CZ 75 compact, and the selective-double-action with decocker Arex Rex Zero compact.

- Forward-Mounted-Magazine 9mm Pistols From SIG, Zenith and CZ. Tested: CZ Scorpion EVO 3 S1, SIG Sauer MPX-PSB, and Zenith Firearms MKE Z-5RS with SB Brace.

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