GUN TESTS®

THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

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VARMINTING AR-15 RIFLES

In this match-up of models from Ruger, Rock River, Remington, and Windham Weaponry, the SR-556VT may be our pick. ● Page 6





9MM COMPACTS

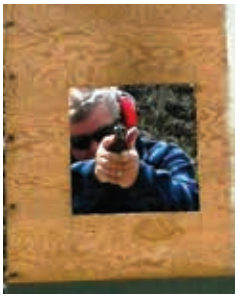
Earlier M&P test guns malfunctioned, but here the M&P9c shines. The H&K P2000SK does well too, but at a much higher price. ● Page 13



KIT GUNS

A 22 LR revolver can be a fun part of every outdoorsman's gear. But for kit, should you buy a new Ruger SP101 or a used Taurus Model 94? ● Page 18

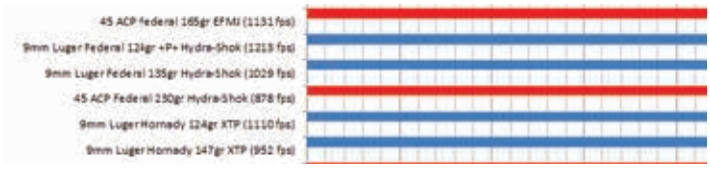
CARRY 1911S



Kimber's Tactical Pro goes up against SIG's Scorpion. Outcome: Two good carry guns, but one is better than the other. ● Page 22

AMMUNITION COMPARISON

9mm and 45 ACP self-defense rounds in ballistic gelatin. Check out the surprising results... ● Page 27



DOWNRANGE: 2 ● FIRING LINE: 3 ● SHORT SHOTS: 32 ● COMING UP: 32

DOWNRANGE

CA WAITING PERIOD VIOLATES 2ND



Todd Woodard

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California issued an opinion in August holding that California's 10-day waiting period for nearly all firearm sales violates the Second Amendment, at least as applied to individuals who have already purchased firearms.

Like the Peruta ruling I reported on in April of this year, this is a big win if the decision holds up through what will likely be further challenges by California's state government. Even if the decision is not appealed, it will not take effect for at least 180 days because of a stay that was granted to give California sufficient time to alter its firearm procedures to comply with the court's holding.

Judge Anthony W. Ishii's opinion generally found California's justifications for the waiting period insufficient to overcome the burden the waiting period placed on Californians' right to keep and bear arms.

In rejecting the state's background check justification, the court found that in many cases background checks are completed anywhere from a few hours to one day, and in the vast majority of cases, the check was completed in fewer than 10 days, so the background check provided no justification for the waiting period beyond the actual time needed to complete the check on a case-by-case basis.

The court was not persuaded by the state's "cooling off period" justification, because individuals in each of the three classes already owned a firearm or had undergone a thorough background investigation that made it extremely unlikely that these individuals would carry out an impulsive violent crime.

As to the state's "straw purchase" justification, the court found that there was no evidence that the legislature had intended the waiting period to serve as a deterrent to straw purchases or that the waiting period actually did deter straw purchases.

Gun owners should take a page from voters in the town of Castle Rock, Colorado, who passed two referenda that strengthen gun rights in their neck of the woods.

Once a municipal judge certified the results of Castle Rock's Aug. 19 special election, the open carry of firearms was allowed in all town-owned facilities and parks, the town said in a news release.

The issue came to a head in January, after the city council voted 4-3 to ease the town's open-carry restrictions, which had been in effect since 2003. Some citizens challenged the council decision by collecting signatures to place two measures on the ballot, but those anti-gunners lost on both counts.

Referendum A, which prohibits the town manager from banning the open carrying of firearms in public parks, passed by 50.8%. Referendum B, which requires a town vote before local officials are allowed to alter gun laws in Castle Rock, passed by 71.2% of the vote.

Yes, these are small, very localized wins. But any pro-gun-ownership movement in Colorado should be applauded and replicated. **GT**

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What About the LC9s and XD-s?

Reader Petty wonders how Ruger's new concealable handgun will fare when pitted against a small Springfield 9mm. We're working on it. And reader pros and cons on the Phoenix HP22A.

Upcoming Tests

Do you have any tests scheduled for the LC9s striker-fired Ruger and Springfield's XDS 9mm?

— David Petty

The LC9s and 9mm XD-S have been shipped to Bob Campbell for testing. So they are a couple of months away. — Todd Woodard





Re "1911s: Buy New or Used? We Test Three 45 ACPs to Find Out," July 2014

So you tested compact 1911 45s and two did not operate properly. At what point do you trust your life to one? My primary carry gun has never malfunctioned in any way, despite having well over one thousand rounds through it. You've probably already guessed it's a revolver. Through the military and many years of law enforcement, I never have had a malfunction from any of my revolvers, which is why revolvers will always be my first choice for self defense, and what I will always recommend to the new shooters I work with. Semi-autos are fun to play with, but I won't trust my life or my loved ones to one.

— Joseph Dickens

Re "Another Brace of Nines: SIG's New P938 Takes on S&W Shield," March 2013

Have you ever heard anything back from SIG after your test of their P938? I have checked every issue since then and have not found that they gave any reason (excuse) for its poor performance. I have one and so far have not had any problems with it as you described, but it has a trigger pull that has to be over 10 pounds and ranks right down there with a Cobra Patriot that I had a few years ago and quickly got rid of. Is there any aftermarket fix for the trigger pull in the SIG P938?

— Howard Born

Nope, we didn't hear anything back from the factory. We don't advocate your doing a trigger job on your pistol. It's better to find and hire a quality gunsmith for that particular job, we believe. — tw

Re "Three 22 Autos for the Trail: Phoenix's HP22A Earns an A+," June 2007

About the Gun of the Week, a Phoenix HP22, on the redesigned Gun-Tests.com website, I would love

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.

to comment as a long-term owner of the gun. A lifetime warranty is no good if you can't contact the company easily, and I've already had my Phoenix replaced due to manufacturing defects (barrel, firing pin, failure to cycle). In addition, the current replacement sent by the factory has a non-functional safety. You may want to caution other readers to beware of bargain guns and to thoroughly safety-check the gun each time they shoot! Thanks for a great magazine and an improved web site. **— Alan Frazer**

Your online review of the Phoenix Arms pistol was spot on. My son and I have had these beauties for more than 20 trouble-free years. Of interest is the deluxe range kit. This features two barrels, about 3 inches and 5 inches. The longer barrel greatly improves the sight radius and accuracy. The lockable carrying case is excellent. More than once it has satisfied TSA at airports. These little guns represent outstanding value for their intended purpose, plinking and casual shooting. **— Joe Turner**

Compliant Test Guns

I have been a subscriber for many years now. Enjoy the no-BS testing articles — keep telling it like it is. However, this leads me to a concern involving mainly the rifles and shotguns that you have and continue to test. Unfortunately, since I live in New York State, under the unconstitutional NYS SAFE Act, most of these semi-automatic guns are banned.

Two questions: One, are you going to start testing guns that law-abiding citizens in all 50 states can purchase as a regular part of your monthly magazine? I know more and more manufacturers are now stating the availability of compliant state firearms in their specs.

My second question involves small-caliber firearms — autoloading pistols and rifles. With the price of ammo and availability in question these days, it would be nice to have an alternative to the common 9mm, 40 S&W, 45 ACP, 357 Magnum, 223 Rem., 308 Win. cartridges. I would like to see tests of 17 HMR, 17 MACH 2, 22 WMR, 17 Hornet, 17 Rem. and similar products.

Please keep up the tests of rifle, shotgun, and pistol accessories — love those. **— Richard Rossi**
Denver, New York

Hey Richard: I understand the problem. On the first question, we're attempting to list "compliant" models of existing rifles that are available for sale nationally. Usually, compliant means restricted capacity or fixed magazines, so functionality is less of a problem. But our choice is to evaluate a mechanism that's available nationally, and cover the compliance issues separately. Second, we'll continue evaluating traditional sporting arms like bolt actions, lever actions, and other rifles that aren't (as) constricted by some of the states. On the handgun side, I've assigned Robert Sadowski to cover revolvers, which are less regulated in most states.

As far as cartridges, I assign as much 22 LR material as I can find. As match-ups of guns appear in other chamberings, we'll take a look at them. — tw

Honest Gun Tests

This is my third time being a subscriber. I opted for the digital version this time, and so far so good. Jogging my memory a bit, with all the gun mags I subscribe to, I can't recall ever reading a review elsewhere in which the author flat said the gun was a piece of junk — except here. I keep returning to you whenever I am considering another gun purchase. Thanks for your honesty.

— Glenn

Glad to have you back, and we appreciate your comments. Everyone who has ever contemplated purchasing a gun has wanted an honest opinion about it beforehand from someone they trust — brother, mom, friend, guy at the range. No one wants to throw money away. So we just do what we think journalists everywhere should do — find an interesting story angle, research it, report what we find — without trying to make somebody a winner or a loser in advance. — tw

Scout Rifle Request

How about a comparison rating the Ruger Scout Rifle and the new Mossberg MVP Patrol? Throw in another "scout rifle" to make it your usual threesome. I'm leaning towardsbuying the Ruger, but would love to get y'alls take on it.

— Dave Williams
Pearland, Texas



As you note, we haven't tested the Patrol yet, but we have tested the Ruger Gunsite Scout Rifle (Grade B-) and the Steyr Scout (Grade A) in the May 2011 issue and the August 1998 (Grade A) issue. Also, we've tested the Savage 308 Model 10 FCM Scout No. 18138 (Grade B, September 2011). So please consult the sidebar on the facing page and log in to the archives to read those issues. Also, there's an exchange in the October 2011 issue regarding the concept of Scout rifles that's worth a look. In "Firing Line" in that issue, reader Larry Root wrote, "As a longtime subscriber, I've really had it with Scout-style rifles. Nothing against Ray Ordorica's recent series of Scout reviews, but the concept has proven to be a market failure… For almost any tactical situation under 200 meters, a bolt-action rifle makes about as much sense as teats on a boar hog. Where the scope is mounted means not a durned thing. Bolt actions are slow, end of story… The Steyr was a bust, and the Ruger and Savage will be too because anyone with real field experience knows that accurate, fast shooting trumps accurate, slow shooting every time." To find it in the

archives, search for "Larry Root," quotes included but no comma, and the "Firing Line" from that issue will pop up. — tw

Print Versus Digital

Why can I not get GUN TESTS magazines sent to Australia?

— Karizmahpalominos

A better choice would be to get the $24/year digital version — a lot less expensive, and no delivery delays. Everybody knew there was a digital-only subscription available now, right? No renewal notices, no torn issues. Also, I'm currently testing a tagged PDF version for digital subscribers that will have clickable links built in. — tw

Re "AK-47s: Fixed-Stock Romanian Versus Folding-Stock Yugoslav," December 2011

I am writing to help you clarify some data regarding your comparisons between the "Yugoslavian AK-47 M70 versus Romanian WASR" in the *2014 Buyers Guide*. It states that the M70 was manufactured at the Zastava Arsenal in Kragujevac, Yugoslavia. However, according to the picture, that rifle was a current-production PAPM70, and not the pre-ban M90. The PAPM70 was, and is, manufactured in Serbia, due to the fact that Yugoslavia has not been a country since 1992. Although it is very similar to the M90, the M70 has slightly thicker receiver and a cold-hammer-forged barrel and not the standard button-rifled one of the older M90. Also, the pistol grips are different.

As for your comment on the AK slant brake and why it was not timed correctly, all original AK-47 designs had a brake that was slightly timed left or right, but never directly at 12 o'clock. This was due to the effect that full-auto fire has on the rifle and made the rifle stay planted firmly in the palm of the forward hand. For example, a right-handed shooter would have the brake timed at the 2 o'clock position while sighting down the rifle, so that the muzzle



blast would direct the muzzle down and slightly left. This would keep the rifle more controllable in the full-auto-fire mode.

In addition, the button on the dust cover was conceived by Zastava (the only AK-47 that has it), so that the rifle was easier to put back together in cold weather wearing gloves (it gets cold in Serbia!) This function allowed soldiers to rest the dust cover on the recoil guide rod, then just push the button to release it fully back, hence locking the dust cover on and not pinching a piece of glove in the dust cover (very little known fact). Keep up the good work, appreciate the magazine!

— William T. Finn
President, Finn Defense

Re "Hot-Weather Carry: Talon IWB, Ted Blocker S18 Are Best Buys," August 2014

The review of concealed-carry holsters was interesting, but for me had a glaring omission of one complete category of concealed-carry options — ankle holsters. Inside-the-pant and outside-the-pant holsters require new pants or shirts.

To ankle-carry, I just wear black or dark socks and hiker shoes with long pants. The holster rides down against the top of the hikers boots where it is still completely covered by the pants cuff. Accessible and completely concealed. **— Reg**

Thanks for the idea. — tw **GT**

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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 without your permission, but we may need to contact you.* **GT**

Varminting AR-15s: Ruger, RRA, Remington, Windham Weaponry

In this match up of semi-autos suitable for walking-around critter hunting, Ruger's SR-556VT is our pick for its accuracy, great trigger, and ease of cleaning. Rock River's A4 comes in second.

Coyote hunting has become a popular hunting pursuit, with new specialized rifles and equipment coming out each year. The AR-15 platform itself has become a widespread coyote-killing choice due to its handiness, accuracy, and ability to execute rapid follow-up shots. These rifles usually weigh around 7 pounds (without scope) and have a slender barrel contour. But there is more than one way to skin a coyote, as we found in a recent test.

We shot four rifles we might consider as walking-around varminters, the first being the Remington R-15 VTR Predator Carbine chambered in 223 Remington, $999, which we bought at an Academy Sporting Goods store in Houston more than a year ago (SKU #421833447, UPC 00047700601069). A recent store check didn't turn up any more of the all-black version tested here, but it is the same mechanically as the still-cataloged #60003 in the Remington line, which has an Advantage MAX-1 HD camouflage skin. This was our first look at the R-15, although we had tested the company's R-25 in the April 2009 issue.

Our next rifle marks a company's debut in these pages, the Windham Weaponry Model VEX-SS "Varmint Exterminator" R20FSSFTSKV, $1295, which was designated the WW-15 Varmint Exterminator when we began testing in May 2013.

The third was a more typical varmint rifle in the form of the Rock River Arms LAR-15 A4 Varminter AR1500X 223 Rem./5.56 NATO, $1215. This rifle was tested to provide a contrast between the more typical varmint rifle and the specialized walking varminters.

Next up was Ruger's SR-556VT Autoloading Rifle #5914, which has a 5.56 NATO chamber and lists for $1995. It joins an ever-growing list of Ruger AR-style



The SR-556VT Autoloading Rifle #5914 has been recalled by Ruger because some parts in the trigger weren't hardened properly. We didn't have any problems with the trigger, and as tested, we preferred it over rifles from Remington, Rock River Arms, and Windham Weaponry. So we're holding its A- grade as "Pending" until our gun has had the parts retrofit done. Here, it's dressed with a Trijicon VCOG 1-6x24 optical gunsight, which comes with an integral Picatinny base. The ammo selections are American Eagle 55-grain FMJs, lower left, and Federal XM855LC AC1 62-grain FMJ Ball ammo on a 10-round stripper clip, center, and in the brown box at right. The rifle comes with three 5-round magazines (one in the rifle), but we also function-tested it with the Magpul PMag 30 AR/M4 Gen M2 MOE Limited Edition Texas magazine, foreground, and regular PMags, far right, and others. The sling is a Magpul MS3 Single QD Gen 2, and the pull-through cleaner is a Hoppe's Bore Snake.

RANGE DATA

TulAmmo 223 Rem. TA223550 55-gr. Full Metal Jacket	Remington R-15 VPR	Windham Weaponry VEX-SS	Ruger SR-556VT	Rock River Varmint A-4
Average Velocity	2967 fps	3177 fps	2980 fps	3158 fps
Muzzle Energy	1075 ft.-lbs.	1232 ft.-lbs.	1084 ft.-lbs.	1218 ft.-lbs.
Average Group Size	3.3 in.	3.2 in.	2.8 in.	2.2 in.

Federal 223 Rem. 62-gr. FMJ AE223N	Remington R-15 VPR	Windham Weaponry VEX-SS	Ruger SR-556VT	Rock River Varmint A-4
Average Velocity	2803 fps	2999 fps	2846 fps	3007 fps
Muzzle Energy	959 ft.-lbs.	1098 ft.-lbs.	989 ft.-lbs.	1104 ft.-lbs.
Average Group Size	2.7 in.	3.7 in.	3.1 in.	2.4 in.

Black Hills 223 Rem. 77-gr. Sierra MatchKing HP	Remington R-15 VPR	Windham Weaponry VEX-SS	Ruger SR-556VT	Rock River Varmint A-4
Average Velocity	2626 fps	2778 fps	2699 fps	2820 fps
Muzzle Energy	842 ft.-lbs.	942 ft.-lbs.	889 ft.-lbs.	971 ft.-lbs.
Average Group Size	1.2 in.	1.4 in.	1.7 in.	1.1 in.

To collect accuracy data, we fired five 5-shot groups from the 100-yard bench at a private range in Houston. The rifles were supported by a Caldwell Fire Control Front Shooting Rest (MidwayUSA, $270, Product #956104) and sand bags. We used a Bushnell 4-16x50mm Elite 4200 Series Riflescope with Multi-X Reticle & Adjustable Objective #424165M on all four. Each time we shot confirmation groups before beginning an accuracy string. Targets: Redhead 12-inch Sight-In Target #135-997 with 6-inch black center diamond and four 3-inch-diameter black diamonds, available from BassPro.com. We recorded velocities using a CED M2 Chronograph with Infrared Screen Set ($290, Brownells #399-000-012WB and #399-100-002WB) with the first screen set 10 feet from the muzzle. Temperatures ranged between 68 and 80 degrees, with variable sunlight and winds.

Ammo sources: TulAmmo 223 Rem. TA223550 55-gr. Full Metal Jacket $4.49/20 (CTD #AMM-2900); Federal American Eagle 223 Rem. 62-gr. FMJ AE223N $9.62/20 (CTD #67709); and Black Hills Ammunition 223 Rem. 77-grain Sierra MatchKing Hollow Point Moly Coated M223N9M $52.17/50 (MidwayUSA #512990).



Above: Using the Bushnell 4-16x50mm Elite 4200 Riflescope, it was easy to see bullet impacts on the Redhead Sight-In Target.



Right: The Black Hills 77-grain match was clearly the most accurate ammo in the test, producing groups of 1.1 inches in the RRA Varmint, 1.2 inches in the R-15, 1.4 inches in the Windham, and 1.7 inches in the Ruger.

semi-autos, including the SR-762 308 Win./7.62 NATO, which we tested in the September 2014 issue, and the others in 5.56 NATO, including the SR-556 (January 2010) and SR-556E (January 2012). After testing was complete, we learned this rifle had been recalled. More on that in a minute.

All four rifles were of the flat-top variety with Picatinny rails that allow the easy mounting of optics. To keep things consistent, we used a proven Bushnell Elite 4200 4-16x50mm scope mounted in Rock River Arms one-piece rings with a Picatinny base. For accuracy, we tested each rifle with five 5-shots groups for each of three different ammo types: TulAmmo 55-grain full metal jackets, Federal 62-grain full metal jackets, and Black Hills 77-grain moly-coated match hollowpoints. Because these rifles might be used for high-volume shooting, we fired the rifles as quickly as we could while maintaining good technique and careful sighting. We did allow time between groups for cooling. At no time did the barrels on these rifles get hot enough to prevent grasping them firmly with bare hands.

Here's how they did at the range and in the field:

Remington R-15 VTR Predator Carbine 223 Remington, $999

This 223 Remington rifle is based on the classic Eugene Stoner AR-15 design with its direct-gas-impingement action, split upper and lower receivers with standard safety, magazine, and bolt releases, and a box magazine forward of a vertical pistol grip. It possessed a free-floating forend and a light-contour 0.68-inch-diameter 18-inch barrel. Weighing 7.1 pounds unloaded, the rifle was light and well balanced. The rifle came with instruction booklet, action safety flag, trigger lock, and one 5-round magazine.

Fit and finish were consistently good, with the exception of a loose fit between the upper and lower receivers. While the rifle lacked a forward rail for a front sight, it did have two sling mounts in the front. This is a particularly useful feature on a walking varmint rifle because it allows the mounting of both a sling and a bipod.

While one shooter noticed a lot of spring noise when shooting, all testers agreed that it wouldn't affect the rifle's effectiveness. One major issue was the trigger quality. Even for an AR-15, the trigger was very gritty and stiff at 7.6 pounds. This made shooting good groups a challenge. In fact, our best groups came at the end of the testing session when we adapted our shooting technique to be more like what we would use with a double-action revolver than a precision rifle. While it seemed like the rifle wanted to shoot, the trigger prevented consistent groups, we thought. While this rifle shot and cycled all three ammo types flawlessly, its 1:9-twist barrel was much more accurate with the heavier 77-grain bullets. TulAmmo averaged 3.3-inch groups, Federal averaged 2.7-inch groups, and the Black Hills ammo averaged 1.2-inch groups. Clearly, the Black Hills ammo is the only one that produced acceptable groups for hunting. Also, the velocity was consistently lowest in the Remington due to its 18-inch barrel, though the testers did not think the velocities

REMINGTON R-15 VTR PREDATOR CARBINE
223 REMINGTON, $999
GUN TESTS GRADE: C+

Our all-black version is the same mechanically as the still-produced #60003, which instead of black cosmetics, has Advantage MAX-1 HD camouflage. The trigger was a big turnoff. It might rate a B+ or A- with a better trigger.



Action	Semi-Auto Direct Impingement
Overall Length	36.5 in.
Overall Height	7.1 in.
Barrel	18 in. Long; 1:9 Twist; Fluted Chrome Moly Vanadium Steel, Target Crown
Flash Suppressor	None
Weight w/Mag	7.1 lbs.
Weight w/Loaded Mag (5 rds.)	7.3 lbs.
Length of Pull	13.75 in.
Magazine	(1) Remington Alum. 5-Round; Compatible w/AR-15/M-16 Types
Upper Receiver	Forged Aluminum 5.4 in. (13 Slots) Flat-Top Rail
Lower Receiver	Forged Aluminum
Stock	A2
Forend	Free-Float Alum. Alloy Handguard; 2 Sling Swivel Studs
Grip	Black Polymer
Trigger-Pull Weight	7.6 lbs.
Rear Sight	None
Front Sight	None
Hard Case	No
Warranty	Two-Year Limited
Telephone	(800) 243-9700
Website	Remington.com
Made In	USA



Above: The R-15's fixed buttstock was the standard A2 style.



Fit and finish on the rifle were consistently good, save for slight looseness between the upper and lower receivers. The trigger wasn't particularly good with a break weight of 7.6 pounds.



The free-float aluminum handguard was checkered for better grip. No problems with it.



The black-oxide finish was evenly applied on all the metal surfaces, including the flutes in the barrel. The barrel was a medium-contour diameter.



WINDHAM WEAPONRY VEX-SS VARMINT EXTERMINATOR #R20FSSFTSKV 223 REM., $1295

GUN TESTS GRADE: D+

The magazine was a little sticky. The trigger was gritty. Rounds tended to drift up and to the right as the barrel heated up. We had failures to function and poor accuracy with both the TulAmmo and Federal ammunition.



Action	Semi-Auto Gas Impingement, Carpenter 158 Steel Bolt
Overall Length	38.25 in.
Overall Height	7.75 in.
Barrel	20 in. Long/1:8 RH Twist, Free-Floated Fluted 416R Stainless Steel, Compass Lake Spec. Chamber
Flash Suppressor	None
Weight w/out Mag	8.2 lbs.
Weight w/Loaded Mag (5 rds.)	8.4 lbs.
Length of Pull	14.0 in.
Magazine	(1) 5-Rd. Supplied; Compatible w/AR-15/M-16 Types
Stock	Skeleton Stock with Sling Swivel
Upper Receiver	M4A4 Type Flat-Top; w/Optics Riser Blocks
Lower Receiver	Forged 7075-T6 Aircraft Alum.; Alum. Trigger Guard; Hardcoat Anodized
Forend	Knurled, Vented Alum. Free Float
Grip	Hogue Rubber
Trigger-Pull Weight	5.8 lbs.
Rear Sight	None; Ships w/Riser Blocks
Front Sight	None
Hard Case	Yes
Warranty	Lifetime Transferable
Telephone	(207) 893-2223
Website	WindhamWeaponry.com
Made In	Windham, ME



The gas block had a rail onto which one of the two supplied riser blocks could be affixed. They were for an optic.



The WW's rubber buttpad was soft and contoured for good shoulder fit. The sling attachment made carrying in the field easy.



The forend was a free-floated, vented aluminum tube.



The stock consisted of a foam-covered upper tube and a smaller tube that formed a triangular brace. Our shooters thought it was very comfortable.



The Hogue rubber pistol grip featured a pebbled surface and finger grooves for a solid grip.

would make a significant difference in the field.

Our Team Said: While there was much our shooters liked on this rifle, the poor trigger prevents the R-15 from being a great choice.

Windham Weaponry VEX-SS Model R20FSSFTSKV 223 Rem./5.56mm, $1295

Windham Weaponry operates from the old Bushmaster factory in Windham, Maine. Freedom Group bought Bushmaster in 2006, then moved Bushmaster production to New York in 2011, leaving behind the original Bushmaster owner, Richard Dyke, the Bushmaster factory property, and a pool of skilled, laid-off workers. In less than a year and a half, Windham Weaponry brought back almost 70 employees and established their name as a competitive AR-15 firearms manufacturers. In its standard rifle lineup, WW offers an interesting set of choices, including the Model 308 Win.–chambered R16FTT-MA-308, $1442; the carbon-fiber New York–compliant Model R16M4FTT-CF1-NYTHD, $1040; the VEX wood-stock series, $1480, and others.

This rifle is based on the standard AR-15 platform and is compatible with both 223 Rem. and 5.56 NATO ammunition. It ships with one 5-round magazine, safety flag, trigger lock, and instructions. Fit was generally good, except for a slightly loose upper/lower joint. The rifle had a consistent black matte finish. It had a free-floating forend and a slender stainless-steel 20-inch barrel with a 1:8 twist.

This 8.2-pound rifle had an unusual stock consisting of a large, foam-covered upper tube attached to a standard pad and a smaller tube forming a triangular brace. While different, it proved to be very comfortable. Probably due to this stock design, this rifle was exceptionally well balanced and easy to handle.

While shooting, we encountered several issues. Though the safety and bolt release levers worked fine, the magazine was sticky. The trigger

was gritty as well, but not unusually so for a stock AR-15 trigger. When shooting, rounds shot from the rifle tended to drift up and to the right as the barrel heated up.

A bigger problem was that the rifle had failures to function with both the TulAmmo and Federal ammunition. Also, accuracy was consistently poor with the TulAmmo, averaging 3.2-inch groups. The Federal groups averaged a terrible 3.7 inches. Obviously, the rifle preferred the heavier Black Hills ammo, which averaged 1.4-inch groups.

Our Team Said: Don't Buy. While handy and well balanced, the Windham's lack of accuracy and multiple failures to function prevented it from being a player in this very competitive test. We never felt confident that we could rely on the rifle to deliver a precise shot on target.

Ruger SR-556VT Autoloading Rifle #5914 5.56 NATO, $1995

The Ruger rifle was an AR-15 type with a piston-driven design instead of direct gas impingement. It had a 20-inch 1:8 twist stainless-steel barrel compatible with both 223 Rem and 5.56 NATO rounds. The forend was free floating, smooth and comfortable to hold without gloves. The buyer can add Picatinny rail sections to the forend if he so desires. The testers noted that the controls were some of the smoothest and most positive they had ever encountered on an AR-15. We did have an issue with the bolt cover not staying closed.

One nice thing about this rifle is that it shipped with three 5-round magazines (instead of the usual one) as well as the standard safety flag, trigger lock, and instructions. The fit and finish were good, with a snug upper/lower receiver fit. We did notice the buttpad for the A2-style stock was a little proud compared to the rest of the stock. One tester stated he would prefer a collapsible stock. That would be easily accomplished if the buyer preferred it. The rifle has an oversized charging handle, and the stock featured two built-in compartments for storing cleaning supplies or small parts.

RUGER SR-556VT AUTOLOADING RIFLE #5914
5.56 NATO, $1995
GUN TESTS GRADE: A- (PENDING)

The Ruger was not the most accurate rifle in the test, but its piston-driven function was very clean and cool to operate. Also, it had a two-stage trigger that was easily the best in this test.



Action	Semi-Auto Two-Stage Gas Piston; Chrome-Plated; 4-Pos. Gas Valve; Chrome-Plated Bolt Carrier Group
Overall Length	38.25 in.
Overall Height	7.75 in.
Barrel	20 in. Long/1:8 RH Twist, 6 Grooves, Polished 410 Stainless Steel
Flash Suppressor	None
Weight Empty (w/Mag)	8.75 lbs.
Weight Loaded (5 rds.)	8.88 lbs.
Length of Pull	13.75 in.
Magazine	(3) Steel C Products Def. 5-Rd.
Upper Receiver	Alum. Alloy, Black Oxide Finish, Hardcoat Anodized; Flat-Top Picatinny Rail
Lower Receiver	Alum. Alloy, Black Oxide Finish, Hardcoat Anodized
Stock	Black Synthetic A2
Forend	Round Alum. Alloy Handguard
Grip	Magpul MOE
Trigger-Pull Weight (1st/2nd Stage)	2.1/3.8 lbs.
Rear Sight	None
Front Sight	None
Sight Radius	NA
Hard Case	No
Warranty	None Written
Telephone	(603) 865-2442
Website	Ruger.com
Made In	USA



The stainless barrel and bolt stood out on the black receiver.



We saw a snug fit between the two halves of the Ruger.



The aluminum handguard was substantial and well vented for volume shooting, if you're lucky enough to need it.



The buttpad was a tad too big at the seam.

Another nice thing about this rifle was the slightly oversized trigger guard. One of our field shoots took place in near freezing weather, and our shooters graded this rifle as the most glove-friendly of the group. This is an important factor as coyote hunting often takes place in cold weather. The balance was a little front heavy because of the handguard and stainless tube. Even so, many shooters prefer a front-heavy rifle for off-hand shooting, but the buyer will need to decide if this aspect of the rifle suits his preferences. Downside: This rifle was noticeably heavier

ROCK RIVER ARMS LAR-15 VARMINT A4 AR1520X 223 REM./5.56MM, $1639

GUN TESTS GRADE: B+

The basic version of this rifle runs $1245; our as-tested price includes $65 Gas Buster with Big Latch Charging Handle, $230 for the Magpul PRS stock, and $99 for the hydraulic buffer, which is no longer available. This was the most accurate rifle in the test with two of the three ammo selections. However, it choked on the TulAmmo, registering several failures to feed.



Action	Semi-Auto Direct Gas Impingement
Overall Length	37.0 in.
Overall Height (w/o Sights)	6.6 in.
Barrel	223 Wylde Chamber, 20 in. Long, 1:8 Twist,, Free Floated Stainless Steel, .920 Bull Profile
Weight w/out Mag	10.5 lbs.
Weight w/Loaded 30-Rd. Mag	11.6 lbs.
Length of Pull	12.6 in.
Magazine	(1) Mil-Spec Alum. 30-Rd.
Upper Receiver	Flat-Top Picatinny Rail
Lower Receiver	7075-T6 Aircraft Grade Aluminum
Stock	Magpul PRS, Black w/ Enidine Hydraulic Buffer
Forend	Hogue Overmolded Free Float Tube, Black, Rifle Length
Grip	ERGO Pistol Grip, Ambi, Black
Trigger-Pull Weight (1st Stage)	2.6 lbs.
Trigger-Pull Weight (2nd Stage)	4.3 lbs.
Rear Sight	NA
Front Sight	NA
Sight Radius	NA
Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Telephone	(866) 980-7625
Website	RockRiverArms.com
Made In	USA
CA Compliant	No
MA, NJ, NY, CT Compliant	Model Available



The stainless barrel is a hoss, and it accounts for some of the sizable weight penalty the RRA operates under. The 223 Wylde chamber allows it to shoot both 223 Rem. and 5.56mm NATO rounds interchangeably. Rifles with .223 Rem. chambers often don't shoot 5.56 NATO rounds well, and the practice should be discouraged. 5.56 NATO chambers can shoot 223 Rem. without incident. Below: The weighty rifle-length handguard.





The Enidine Hydraulic Buffer is housed in the excellent PRS stock. The buffer makes the recoil pulse noticeably softer and smoother when shooting heavier loads. However, the manufacturer warned that functionality might be affected with lighter loads. We never experienced function problems prior to shooting the Tulammo. The buffer is no longer offered, and it is easy to exchange the hydraulic buffer with a standard buffer if the shooter wishes.

than the other walking varminters, and as a result it may be tiring over a long day in the field. The overall impression was that the Ruger is a very solid piece of kit.

The two-stage trigger was the easily the best of the walking varminters, with a 2.1-pound first stage and a second final stage of 3.8 pounds. At Ruger.com/SR556VTRecall, the company says, "We have determined that the disconnector in the two-stage trigger system on our SR-556VT modern sporting rifles was not properly heat treated by a vendor and that the disconnector can wear prematurely. This, in turn, can result in an unsafe condition in which the rifle delays firing (there is a delay in firing after the trigger is pulled) or doubles (discharging once when the trigger is pulled and again when the trigger is released). Although no incidents have been reported from the field, this is an important safety issue, and we are therefore recalling the rifles." The company goes on to say the affected disconnector is used only in the two-stage trigger system found in the SR-556VT models, and no other models of the SR-556 are affected by the recall. But all SR-556VT rifles manufactured to date are subject to the recall.

The rifle functioned flawlessly, though the velocity was less than the Windham and Rock River rifles. The groups were generally good with the TulAmmo and Federal brands, with the exception of one unexplainably large 5.2-inch group shooting the Federal ammo. This was probably a shooter or ammo anomaly, but we have to report what we found. This particular rifle did not perform as well with the Black Hills ammo as the other three rifles with an average 1.7-inch group. However, this is probably still accurate enough for effective hunting at cartridge-appropriate ranges. One interesting item noted was that the first round for each group for all the brands of ammo tended to shoot to the left. Also, as with the Windham Weaponry rifle, the Ruger tended to string shots vertically as its barrel heated up.

This side by side shows how the different makers sought to spec out their rifles in ways that made sense to hunters. You'll notice all the stocks are fixed, but the Remington, top, and the Ruger, third from top, shoot very happily with their plain fixed stocks. Nothing wrong with them, but the Magpul PRS on the Rock River, second from top, and the Windham, bottom, are better choices, in our view. Three of the four handguards are vented to save weight and help barrel cooling. Also, two of the four have rifle-length gas systems, and two are carbines. The barrels have various contours, with the Rock River being the thickest. All of them are free-floating, a necessary feature for an AR to be truly accurate. The Ruger was the only model to incorporate a full-length Picatinny rail on top.



Since the Ruger is a piston-driven rifle, we were curious about how difficult it would be to clean. The Ruger break down instructions were clear and the steps simple. First, remove the rear receiver pin as you would any other AR-15 and remove the bolt group. The cam pin was very easy to remove because the gas key was not present. We noticed that the bolt was fairly clean, with the firing pin being practically spotless. To remove the piston, you need to punch out a pin and rotate the regulator. While the process was simple, the parts were very tight, and you would need tools to perform this part of the breakdown. You can use a standard AR-15 bore guide when cleaning the barrel. Re-assembly was no problem.

Our Team Said: The good two-stage trigger is an advantage, and if the recall fixes the part without changing the trigger's performance, then we'll happily lift the "Pending" from its grade. While heavy at 8.5 pounds, this rifle exuded quality and shot consistently. This rifle's cleanliness is a major plus. The testers were mildly concerned that if they wanted to make a change, there might be fewer forend options available since it is a piston-driven rifle. Keep that in mind if you find that you don't like the forend.

Rock River Arms LAR-15 A4 Varminter AR1500X 223 Rem./5.56mm, $1215

The Rock River Arms rifle had a more standard format for varmint hunting and long-range target shooting with heavier bullets. Those design choices include a 20-inch stainless-steel bull barrel with a Magpul PRS stock and Enindine hydraulic buffer. The stock is of excellent construction and allows a great deal of adjustment. The Enindine buffer softened recoil noticeably. The Hogue Overmolded stock was very comfortable and shielded the hand from barrel heat. Fit was good, and the finish was very evenly applied to both the upper and lower receivers. All the controls were positive and operated smoothly. The rifle came with Rock River's excellent National Match trigger. While the stock and barrel balanced each other out, this rifle was much heavier than the others and not well suited to carrying all day.

But those heavier build elements helped the Rock River easily become the best shooter of the group, with groups averaging 2.2 inches for the TulAmmo, 2.4 inches for the Federal, and 1.1 inches for the Black Hills ammunition. The groups also stayed very consistent throughout the shot strings. However, it proved very unreliable with the 55-grain TulAmmo, encountering several failures to feed. The testers determined this was due to the hydraulic buffer. This issue would be something for the buyer to keep in mind if he were interested in the recoil and cyclic-rate advantages of the hydraulic buffer.

Our Team Said: Conditional Buy. This rifle was the best shooting of the group as well as the most adjustable. It also handled a hot barrel the best. However, the rifle's weight limits its portability. It also did not like the 55-grain ammo. If you are mostly hunting from fixed positions or expecting long strings of fire, it would be hard to beat the Rock River for ease of shooting and consistent accuracy. If you are stalking, you would be better off with the lighter Ruger. In this case, we'd give it a B+ for hunting from fixed positions, but only a C+ if you had to tote it all day.

Written by David Tannahill, using evaluations from Gun Tests *team testers. Photography by* Gun Tests *staff.* **GT**

S&W and H&K 9mm Compact Concealment Pistols Square Off

Earlier iterations of the Military & Police model have been plagued with malfunctions in our tests, but here, the M&P9c shines. The H&K does well too, but at a much higher price.

For more than one hundred years folks have been trying to make a service pistol fit on the hip under a covering garment. The Colt Sheriff's Model was one of the first such downsized handguns, and today practically every service pistol has a compact version. Many shooters with LE histories prefer this because they feel that a downsized service pistol still has a service-grade action and its operating principles are maintained in the more-compact form; that is, a shorter barrel and slide.

Nowadays, compacts and subcompacts for concealed carry save weight over old-generation handguns because new guns from full-size to subcompact use the same material — polymer — regardless of size. To save weight, older downsized frames had to change materials — aluminum rather than steel. Moreover, the subcompact handgun goes one further and also shortens the grip frame, so at least two dimensions shrink substantially. This is great for comfort and concealment.

The drawbacks for downsized handguns are their reliability and power, which reveals why so many popular compacts and subcompacts are chambered in the 9x19mm round. For many shooters, the 9mm is a realistic minimum for personal-defense use, and it's very handy because a shooter can buy just the one caliber and have it run in full-size handguns, subcompact handguns, and carbines by pretty much anyone in the household. The 380 ACP below the 9mm is too little power for many shooters, and the 40 S&W and 45 ACP above it can prove to be a handful for smaller shooters in small guns. With proper load selection and marksmanship, the 9mm represents a reasonable level of power for a practiced shooter.

Toward that end, we selected two popular concealable



The 9mm Luger compact handgun is perhaps the most popular carry gun in the country, and there are dozens of choices to pick from. Here, we test a popular Smith & Wesson and also a Heckler & Koch P2000SK 9mm Luger. The Military & Police 9c is the best buy, well worth its price and with plenty of support gear available at a reasonable price. However, the H&K P2000SK also performed well. It would simply require more cash and time spent mastering the trigger action, in our estimation.



Each pistol was fired with a variety of ammunition. Neither experienced any type of malfunction. It wasn't a toss up, the S&W had a clear advantage, we thought. The pistols are similar in size and shape, with important differences in the operation.

handguns chambered in 9mm for this test: The Smith & Wesson Military & Police M&P9c #209004 and the H&K P2000SK #709302-A5, the first time we've tested any gun in that line. In the April 2007 issue, we shot and didn't like the M&P9c #209004. Unfortunately, that M&P Compact suffered repeated malfunctions wherein the slide would lock back with one round remaining in the magazine. Failure rate was nearly 70 percent.

In the February 2009 issue, we tried the Smith & Wesson M&P Compact 9mm No. 209304. That gun shot way high and right and not very accurately at 15 yards — groups were around 4 inches.

However, hope springs eternal at the GUN TESTS offices, so we cheerily prepped another M&P Compact 9mm and took it to the range.

To evaluate the handguns, they were fired from a solid benchrest-firing position, as we test all handguns. However, in this case the pistols were fired for groups at 15 yards rather than the 25 yards assigned for service pistols. The short sight radius and double-action trigger simply doesn't lend itself well to pinpoint accuracy.

A portion of the test that is more important to personal defense shooters is the combat firing test. This test began with man-sized silhouette targets placed at 5, 7, and 10 yards. Each pistol was drawn from concealed carry.

The Smith & Wesson was carried in a Discreet Defense Solutions inside-the-waistband holster (DiscreetDefenseSolutions.com). This holster has a good fit and comfort, and something we really needed in 98-degree heat — a sweat guard. From Mernickle Holsters (MernickleHolsters.com) came an all-leather IWB with a strong spring-steel belt clip and a generous sweat guard. This holster was actually ordered for a Baby Eagle pistol, but it fit the H&K 2000 just fine. The pistols were belted on under a lighter covering garment, most often a sport shirt, during testing. During the combat-shooting stage, we used

HECKLER & KOCH P2000SK #709302-A5
9MM LUGER, $866
GUN TESTS GRADE: B+

The H&K P2000SK is a thoroughly modern handgun with good features. The extended slide lock proved to be an advantage in fast combat drills; however, perhaps this was a better service-gun feature than a concealed carry feature.



Our H&K came with three interchangeable backstraps. One is on the gun.

Action	Locked Breech DAO Semi-Auto
Overall Length	6.4 in.
Overall Height	4.6 in.
Maximum Width	1.27 in
Weight Unloaded	21.4 oz.
Weight Loaded	27.4 oz.
Barrel Length	3.3 in.
Barrel	Steel
Magazines	(2) 9-Round
Slide	Steel
Frame	Polymer
Frame Front Strap Height	1.75 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	2.8 in.
Grips	3 Panels
Grip Thickness (max)	1.1 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.8 in.
Sights	3-Dot Tritium
Side Radius	5.2 in.
Trigger Pull Weight (Double Action)	7.5 lbs.
Trigger Span (Double Action)	2.9 in.
Safety	No Manual Safety
Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Telephone	(706) 568-1906
Website	HK-USA.com
Made In	Germany



Left: This Mernickle holster gave good results and a sharp draw. The H&K P2000SK came on target quickly, our shooters said.



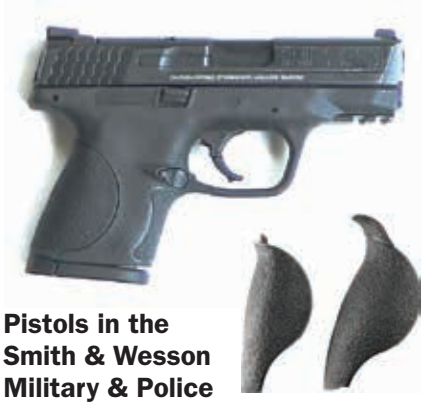
The H&K's magazine latch is fast and positive; however, one rater did not like seeing the internal spring behind the magazine release (arrow).



The field strip of the H&K 2000 was simple, but it was slightly more complicated than the Smith & Wesson.

SMITH & WESSON M&P9C NO. 209004
9MM LUGER, $480
GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

Unlike our test gun in 2009, this piece didn't malfunction, thus its higher grade. The Smith & Wesson subcompact is as slick as possible, with no protruding controls and no manual safety.



Pistols in the Smith & Wesson Military & Police come with two extra (three total) interchangeable grip inserts to tailor handfit.

Action	Locked Breech DAO Semi-Auto Striker Fired
Overall Length	6.7 in.
Overall Height	4.3 in.
Maximum Width	1.3 in.
Weight Unloaded	21.9 oz.
Weight Loaded	27.9 oz.
Barrel Length	3.5 in.
Barrel	Stainless Steel
Capacity	11+1
Slide	Black Stainless Steel
Frame	Black Textured Polymer
Frame Front Strap Height	1.75 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	2.7 in.
Grips	3 Interchangeable Panels
Grip Thickness (max)	1.3 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.4/5.6/5.8 in.
Front Sight	Dovetailed, White Dot
Rear Sight	Steel, Low Profile, 2 White Dots
Sight Radius	5.7 in.
Trigger Pull Weight Double Action	6.0 lbs.
Trigger Span Double Action	2.6 in.
Safety	No Manual Safety
Warranty	Lifetime
Telephone	(800) 331-0852
Website	Smith-Wesson.com
Made In	USA



The slide serrations look almost rakish, and the slide design is appealing, in our opinion.





We preferred the Smith & Wesson disassembly procedure. A captive takedown lever separate from the slide lock just seems better.

The Smith & Wesson and a Discreet Defense Solutions holster were a good combination.

primarily HPR's 115-grain full metal jackets, a few 115-grain jacketed hollowpoint loads from the same maker, and Federal American Eagle 115-grain FMJs. We also were able to fire a magazine with the Winchester 127-grain SXT +P+ loads. Like many of you, we have mixed boxes left over from previous projects and this was the time to use it. The results were interesting.

Smith & Wesson M&P9c No. 209004 9mm Luger, $480

The cost reflects actual pricing from Cheaper Than Dirt! at the time of testing, without shipping and transfer fees. More recently, this gun is listed at CTD for $442. Because the H&K P2000SK was listed at Cheaper Than Dirt! at the same time for $866, that made the price difference at the time of the test $386.

The Smith & Wesson Military & Police self loader is aimed at the market dominated by Glock. Excellent human engineering and good features have resulted in Smith & Wesson gaining a respectable market share in this niche. The smaller version retains the good features of the original full-size pistol. The H&K 2000 is designed to compete in the law-enforcement and personal defense markets. An agency choosing the H&K 2000 handgun has assured the troops that the brass has not purchased a handgun on the low bid.

The Smith & Wesson had several design features that all of the raters liked. The slide design was stylish and the cocking grooves gave plenty of leverage. The H&K cocking grooves worked fine, but we liked the Smith & Wesson better.

The slide was tapered toward the front to allow easy insertion into a tightly molded holster. The slide lock was ambidextrous; the magazine release was not. The frame was nicely stippled across the back strap; the front strap texture wasn't as aggressive. The Smith & Wesson magazines held 11 rounds, one more than the H&K. One seemed stiffer than the other, but there were no function issues.

The raters liked the sights. The rear sight isn't a Novak, but it was high profile and low snag. The front sight was nicely dovetailed in place.

The Smith & Wesson featured a loaded-chamber indicator that works visually only. There was a light rail, albeit a short one.

Trigger compression broke at 6 pounds even. When testing the trigger, we hooked the RCBS registering trigger-pull gauge up, and the trigger did not budge. We had to be certain the hinged component at the bottom of the trigger was actuated. We liked that.

During combat firing, the Smith & Wesson gave good to excellent handling results for a compact handgun. The grip was a little shorter than the H&K, but just the same, we were in control of the pistol. When it came time to measure the back strap, the difference wasn't as great as we thought — the H&K's curve doesn't allow as much gripping space. During the firing stage, the difference in accuracy potential was more evident during the 10-yard combat-firing test, with the Smith & Wesson delivering tighter groups. During speed reloads, our shooters handled the magazine release of the M&P quickly.

During benchrest firing, the M&P9c gave better accuracy than the H&K 2000. This was not expected, as H&K handguns are often very accurate. The longer trigger of the H&K 2000 seemed to be the problem. The most accurate choice was the Speer 124-grain Gold Dot, which notched an average group size of 2.0 inches at 15 yards.

RANGE DATA

HPR 115-gr. JHP	Smith & Wesson M&P9c Compact	Heckler & Koch P2000SK
Average Velocity	1074 fps	1053 fps
Muzzle Energy	294 ft.-lbs.	283 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.9 in.	2.5 in.
Largest Group	2.4 in.	2.9 in.
Average Group	2.2 in.	2.7 in.

Federal 147-gr. Hydra-Shok	Smith & Wesson M&P9c Compact	Heckler & Koch P2000SK
Average Velocity	921 fps	913 fps
Muzzle Energy	276 ft.-lbs.	272 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	2.0 in.	2.4 in.
Largest Group	2.6 in.	3.0 in.
Average Group	2.3 in.	2.6 in.

Speer 124-gr. Gold Dot	Smith & Wesson M&P9c Compact	Heckler & Koch P2000SK
Average Velocity	1101 fps	1093 fps
Muzzle Energy	333 ft.-lbs.	328 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.8 in.	2.4 in.
Largest Group	2.2 in.	2.9 in.
Average Group	2.0 in.	2.6 in.

To collect accuracy data we fired five-shot groups off a solid bench rest at 15 yards. We recorded velocity with a Shooting Chrony Master Chronograph. The first sky screen was set 10 feet from the muzzle.

After the shooting comes the cleaning. The raters liked the breakdown of the M&P better. Unload the pistol, remove the magazine, lock the slide back, twist the lever, and then release the slide to allow it to run forward off the slide. The recoil spring and guide and barrel are easily removed.

Our Team Said: During the test, we saw no failures to feed, chamber, fire, or eject. The price differential of the two handguns has to be taken into consideration. In this case the less-expensive handgun was the better performer.

Heckler & Koch P2000SK #709302-A5 9mm Luger, $866

The H&K P2000SK is a subcompact version of the H&K P2000 service pistol. Its fit and finish were good, and the appearance of the pistol was one of quality manufacturing. The pistol had a stout and purposeful look. Unlike the striker-fired M&P, the H&K features an external hammer. This was no liability in concealed carry, we found. The slide-cocking serrations worked well enough, and the slide was beveled for easy insertion in the holster. The trigger guard was squared with a slightly greater interior area for gloved-hand use. The pistol featured a loaded-chamber indicator in the form of an extractor that protruded when the chamber was loaded. There was a dab of red enamel on the extractor to signify its condition.

We liked the texture of the frame stippling, but our shooters did not care for the finger-groove extension on the front strap. There were slight indentations in the grip frame giving slightly better access to the trigger by shortening trigger reach.

The double-action trigger broke at 7.5 pounds, but its action was the primary impediment to accuracy, we believe. This was a double-action-only trigger with a difference. The slide partially sets the hammer when the slide is racked. The trigger is then a relatively short and smooth 7.5 pounds. However, if there is a failure to fire due to a defective primer, the pistol's trigger may be pressed again and again to ignite the round. It was much heavier at 10 to 12 pounds in this mode, but some feel that this second-strike capability is important.

During the firing tests, the pistol gave good results at all combat ranges, but it was bettered by the Smith & Wesson 9mm during combat testing. Most of us are more familiar with the Browning-type magazine release.

However, one of the raters owns both an H&K P30 and an H&K P7M8. He was able to demonstrate a brilliantly rapid magazine reload with the H&K magazine release. The release is pressed straight down and is ambidextrous. Another advantage was the long slide lock, and this certainly helped in speed loads. In our view, the H&K 2000 is the noticeably faster gun to reload in the hands of a well-trained shooter.

The H&K produced slightly slower velocities than the Smith & Wesson, with the high-velocity loads as much as 21 fps slower in the H&K, but with some only 8 fps slower, an inconsequential difference. Another rater is a long-time double-action-revolver shooter and provided the best groups with the H&K, but not the average. He placed three shots of the Federal 147-grain JHP into an inch at 15 yards, but could not maintain this average. Even he shot better with the M&P 9mm.

Another rater was looking over the H&K, and she did not like that the spring the magazine catch attaches to was visible under the catch. Debris could get in the slot over time, but this didn't affect function for us.

We did not like the field strip as well as the Smith & Wesson's. The slide was locked to the rear, and the slide lock was pressed out to the left. This means the slide lock is not captive. This isn't as modern as the Smith & Wesson, we felt.

Our Team Said: In the end, the H&K seems to be a fine handgun. It is reliable and accurate. The tactical reload is brilliantly fast in trained hands. It also offers a second-strike capability. Still, while the H&K is a good combat gun, it isn't the better buy in this test. The Smith & Wesson outperformed it, in our opinion.

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

GUN TESTS VALUE GUIDE: 9MM CARRY PISTOLS

GUN NAME	ISSUE	GRADE & COMMENTS
Springfield Armory EMP No. PI9209LP 9mm Luger, $1345	June 2013	**Grade A:** The EMP handled like a small 1911, but without the big kick or big power of the larger round.
Kel-Tec PF-9 9mm Parabellum, $333	April 2011	**Grade A:** One of the best carry guns from every important standpoint: price, accuracy, reliability, light weight.
Kahr CM9 9mm Parabellum, $565	June 2011	**Grade A:** The $565 price will keep it in second place compared to the Kel-Tec's very low price of $333.
S&W M&P 9 Shield No. 180021 9mm Luger, $449	March 2013	**Grade A-:** The blocky little Shield was easy to shoot, slim, easily maintained, and not too expensive.
Taurus 24/7 G2 24/7-G29SS-17 9mm Parabellum, $483	March 2012	**Grade A-:** The 24/7 G2 excelled in single-action mode. Ambidextrous controls add value to this pistol.
Glock G19 9mm Parabellum, $646	Aug 2010	**Grade A-:** Trim, fast handling, may be the most versatile Glock. Needs higher-visibility sights.
Springfield Armory XDM 3.8 XDM9389BHC 9mm Para., $697	Aug 2010	**Grade A-:** The XDM's ambidextrous controls and superior action accuracy were our most important buying factors.
Ruger SR9C KSR9C/3313 9mm Parabellum, $525	Aug 2010	**Grade A-:** Good trigger, small, ambi thumb safeties, slim profile, low price
CZ USA 75D PCR Compact No. 91194 9mm Para., $651	Aug 2010	**Grade A-:** Aluminum frame, great accuracy, single-action operation.
Kahr CW9 9mm Parabellum, $549	May 2011	**Grade A-:** A bit of roughness in the Kahr's slide movement was somewhat abated by the end of our shooting.
CZ USA CZ 75 P-07 Duty 91178 9mm Luger, $528	Oct 2013	**Grade B+:** The tall sights are easy to read, with or without a suppressor.

Log on to **GunReports.com** or **Gun-Tests.com** to read complete reviews of these products.

Kit Guns: Ruger SP101 Rimfire Versus Used Taurus Model 94

A kit gun can be part of every outdoorsman's gear for camping, hiking, hunting, or fishing pursuits. The question is, for such a knockabout carry gun, should you buy new or used?

We recently looked at new stainless steel Ruger SP101 ($699) and a used Taurus Model 94 ($300) with an eye toward finding a Bargain Hunter kit gun — generically, a knockabout handgun that was substantial enough to go into the backcountry as a plinker or small-game getter, but which didn't have to cost and arm and a leg. After the tin cans stopped jumping, we wound up with two vastly different, but very good recommendations, as kit guns. In more detail, the two contestants were a Ruger SP101 #5765 KSP-242-8 and a used Taurus Model 94, both small-frame, double-action revolvers with 4-inch barrels, adjustable sights, and high-capacity cylinders. They are chambered in 22 LR but are also compatible with 22 CB caps, 22 Shorts, 22 Longs, and 22 LR shotshells loaded with #12 shot. Besides their versatility, it's usually possible to replenish your stores of 22 cartridges pretty much anywhere that sells ammo.



Great granddad's go bag always contained a small 22 LR revolver, which was called a "kit gun." Often 22 LR revolvers, kit guns were useful for small-game hunting for squirrels, raccoons, and the like as well as for dispatching snakes or rodents, or for plinking cans. They could also be used as defensive weapons for varmints.

In addition to simply finding the better handgun, the task here was to decide what was enough gun for this role without spending unnecessary money. With that caveat thrown in, the Taurus had a huge initial lead because it cost so much less — about $399 cheaper than list and about $235+ cheaper than prices at Cheaper Than Dirt! ($536) and Bud's Gun Shop ($540), not counting transfer fees, shipping, sales taxes and other associated costs. Our used Taurus test gun was most similar to the current production model 94B4 #2-940041, which also has a nine-shot capacity and a 4-inch barrel, a 5-inch height, and an OAL of 8.75 inches. The major difference is the new model has a full lug barrel and a price of $438. Assessing the Taurus test gun's condition, we gauged it at 90%.

RANGE DATA

PMC Target 22 LR 40-gr. RNS	Ruger SP101	Taurus Model 94
Average Velocity	838 fps	829 fps
Muzzle Energy	62 ft.-lbs.	61 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.10 in.	0.48 in.
Average Group	1.30 in.	0.68 in.

Remington Thunderbolt 22 LR 40-gr. RNS	Ruger SP101	Taurus Model 94
Average Velocity	862 fps	884 fps
Muzzle Energy	66 ft.-lbs.	69 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	0.88 in.	0.83 in.
Average Group	0.96 in.	1.00 in.

CCI Mini-Mag 22 LR 40-gr. RNS	Ruger SP101	Taurus Model 94
Average Velocity	1005 fps	992 fps
Muzzle Energy	88 ft.-lbs.	87 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	0.78 in.	1.00 in.
Average Group	1.20 in.	1.20 in.

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

To get things started, we cleaned the 94's bore thoroughly, scrubbing it with a bronze brush after letting it soak in bore cleaner. Then we tried to use a Brownells range rod (Brownells.com) to test the chamber-to-bore alignment, but the 94's bore was tight and the 22-caliber head did not fit, so we didn't force it. We thought, at worst the undersized bore would have an effect on accuracy. We hoped it would be positive. With the Ruger, we discovered all chambers were indeed aligned with the bore.

Off sandbags at 15 yards using the guns' open sights, PMC Target 40-grain roundnose ammo delivered shockingly good results in the Taurus, shooting a best-of-test 0.48-inch group on the way to an five-shot average group size of 0.68 inch, not quite half the size of the Ruger's 1.30-inch average. The Ruger did produce a marginally faster average velocity of 838 fps to the Taurus's 829 fps.

Remington Thunderbolt 40-grain roundnose ammo was a coin flip in average group accuracy, with the SP101 taking a tiny 0.96-inch edge over the Model 94 at 1 inch. The Taurus produced better velocity with this round, however, 884 fps to 862 fps.

CCI Mini-Mag 40-grain roundnoses produced groups likewise too close to call, with both handguns spitting out average group sizes of 1.20 inches, though the SP101 had the smaller best group, 0.78 inches to 1 inch for the Model 94. Velocity slightly favored the Ruger, 1005 fps to 992 fps.

All in, we found these small revolvers were well suited for plinking and small-game hunting, but we thought one offered more value.

Taurus Model 94 22 LR, $300

The Model 94 looked like an old-school S&W since it was blued with a small, partial lug that protected the front of the ejector rod but did not lock up with it. The cylinder locked into the frame at two points: the rear of the ejector and a detent in the top of crane mated to a notch in

TAURUS MODEL 94 22 S, L, LR, $300

GUN TESTS GRADE: B+

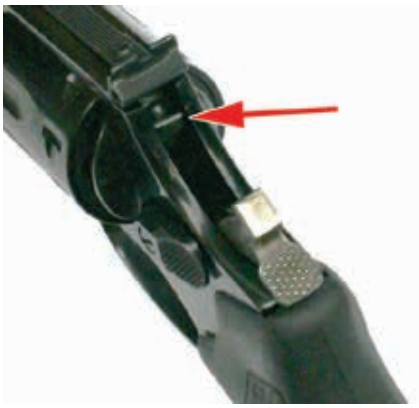
The used Taurus was a natural pointer and felt good in hand, but the sights were lacking. It would make a good low-cost plinker.







The trigger was wide and smooth — especially welcome with the 12-pound DA pull. Single-action trigger pull, 3.5 pounds, was better than the Ruger's.



The transfer bar in front of the firing pin is coming into its fully upright position here.

Action	Double Action
Overall Length	9 in.
Overall Height	5.0 in.
Maximum Width (Cylinder)	1.4 in.
Weight Unloaded	32 oz.
Weight Loaded	36 oz.
Barrel Length	4.0 in.; 1:16 Twist
Capacity	9
Frame Material/Size	Steel/Small
Cylinder Material	Steel, Fluted
Frame Front Strap Height	2.3 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.9 in.
Grips	Black Rubber, Finger Grooves
Grip Thickness (max)	1.1 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	4.7 in.
Front Sight	Grooved Ramp
Rear Sight	Adjustable
Sight Radius	5.7 in.
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	3.5 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight Double Action	12 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.7 in.
Safety	Transfer Bar
Warranty	Unlimited Lifetime
Telephone	(800) 327-3776
Website	TaurusUSA.com
Made In	Brazil





Note the front of the cylinder is chamfered to knock off that sharp edge. Also, that's a lot of steel for the rimfire 22 round. It could be made of another material or trimmed down to save weight. Inset: The ejector spewed out empties clear of the cylinder.

the frame. The gap between frame and crane was tight and there was some wiggle in the cylinder lock up, but we gauged the play to be not excessive. It did not look like this revolver had much trigger time. The Model 94 felt lighter than the Ruger, but it was actually 2 ounces heavier, which had to do with the balance of the gun in hand. Muzzles of both revolvers were crowned for protection if accidentally dropped muzzle first.

The cylinder latch was full size, which we liked since this soft-shooting revolver didn't jam the latch into our thumb knuckle during recoil. We did not use a speed loader, but we did try out Tuff Quick Strips (TuffProducts.com), which held 10 rounds of 22 LR and allow a user to load two chambers at the same time. The strips are flexible polymer and are easy to fill. They keep rounds secure in a pocket and allow for a fairly fast reload. The Model 94 held nine rounds.

The 94 used a set of Taurus rubber grips with finger grooves, which we thought were well suited for this small revolver. They were small, yet had a nice palm swell. Also on the small side were the sights. The 94 had a fixed, serrated-ramp front sight milled into the barrel. The rear notch was tiny and adjustable for windage and elevation via a small flat-blade screwdriver. The rear sight unit extended over the frame top strap and was serrated. At 15 yards, the tiny sights took more effort to use, but we were able to squeeze out 1-inch groups on average. We much preferred the Ruger's sights, which we describe below.

The trigger was wide and smooth and had a nice curve to it that was comfortable to shoot, though the DA trigger pull was too heavy — 12 pounds. The action felt smooth, but the DA pull was a tad too much for accurate work, we thought. The hammer spur had a checkered square pad that was toothy and non-slip when thumbing back the hammer. The transfer-safety bar is used in the mechanism, so the Model 94 could

RUGER MODEL SP101 #5765 KSP-242-8 22 S/L/LR, $699 LIST; $540 RETAIL

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

This was a good revolver, and it should be for the price. There is a lot to like about the SP101—sights, finish, performance. This is a premium example of a kit gun. But the fact is, the used Taurus shot as well, or better. The Ruger is unquestionably the better gun, but it is far from being the better value.







In hand, the SP101 grip was comfortable, yet felt boxy compared to the Taurus.

Action	Double Action
Overall Length	9.1 in.
Overall Height	4.8 in.
Maximum Width (Cylinder)	1.4 in.
Weight Unloaded	30 oz.
Weight Loaded	34 oz.
Barrel	4.2 in. Long; 1:16 RH Twist
Capacity	8
Frame	Stainless Steel, Small
Cylinder	Stainless Steel, Fluted
Frame Front Strap Height	2.1 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.0 in.
Grips	Black Rubber, Checkered Wood
Grip Thickness (max)	1.5 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.6 in.
Front Sight	Green Fiber Optic Tube
Rear Sight	Adjustable Notch
Sight Radius	5.1 in.
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	4.8 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight Double Action	12 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.4 in.
Trigger Span Double Action	3.0 in.
Safety	Transfer Bar
Warranty	None Written
Telephone	(603) 865-2442
Website	Ruger.com
Made In	Newport, NH



The lockup on the Ruger was tight and showed no gaps.



The hammer spur was coarsely checkered for a sure grip; note that the transfer bar just behind the firing pin will raise before it is hit by the hammer. Single-action trigger pull was nice at 4.8 pounds.



Left: The Ruger ejected empties well clear of the cylinder.





Left: The Ruger's chambers are relieved in the SP101 so cartridges sit flush with the rear of the cylinder when chambered. Push the cylinder release into the frame to swing the wheel out. Right: The Taurus nine-shot cylinder was countersunk with an outer edge that was flush with the base of the cartridges; note the full-size cylinder latch.



The Ruger's grip (right) was blocky compared the slender grip on the Taurus (bottom). In the hand, the Taurus felt slim and small, but it was easy to control.





Left: Here's the Ruger's sight picture from the shooter's perspective. The sights were a usable size, and the green fiber-optic front tube glowed brightly in sunlight. Right: The Taurus sights were small and not as easy to use as the Ruger's sights.





Our test ammos included CCI Mini-Mag #0030 (Midway #561225, $6.99/100; and Remington Thunderbolt #21241 (Midway #599864, $22.99/500). We bought PMC Target locally.

be fully loaded with no fear of an accidental discharge if dropped on the hammer over a live round.

Our Team Said: The Taurus went bang every time we pulled the trigger and had acceptable accuracy. The used Taurus was certainly worth the money if you wanted an inexpensive kit gun, but you will have to put up with the tiny sights and heavy DA trigger pull.

Ruger SP101 #5765 KSP-242-8 22 LR, $699 List; $540

The SP101 followed Ruger's design philosophy of making ruggedly built revolvers. The Ruger and Taurus were both on the hefty side compared to some kit guns we've tested. The SP101 looked sharp out of the box with a matte-stainless finish and rubber grips with wood inserts. The wood inserts are checkered and engraved with the company logo. The lock up was tight and the action smooth.

The hammer spur was coarsely checkered for a non-slip grip, and the trigger shoe was wide and smooth. The trigger pull was 12 pounds — just like the Taurus. We thought both were too heavy, but we found the Ruger steadier to shoot in DA. The cylinder latch on the SP101 is squeezed into the frame, unlike the Taurus, which is pushed along side of the frame. The cylinder of the SP101 was easier to access than the Taurus since the end of the ejector dragged along the recoil shield; a notch is cut out in the recoil shield on the Ruger so that it moves freely.

The ejector rod was enclosed in a partial under lug. The rod itself was plain while the end of the rod on the Taurus was knurled. The SP101's cylinder locked up at the rear of the cylinder via the ejector and at the front by a massive detent in the crane. As mentioned, the lockup was tight and secure, and we'd expect it to stay that way for a long time.

The rear sight was matte black and adjustable for windage and elevation via two small slotted screws. You would need a small flat blade screwdriver to make adjustments. The front sight was dovetailed into a raised portion of the muzzle with a green fiber-optic tube that glowed brightly in light and just appeared green in dim light. The rear notch was wide and the green dot bright, so target acquisition was fast. The top of the barrel was machined with fine grooves to reduce glare.

In hand, the grips felt chunky for some testers compared to those on the Taurus, but they were comfortable to shoot. Loading was simplified and faster with the Tuff Quick-Strip. As we noted above, the Taurus was noticeably more accurate with the PMC Target ammo and the handguns were tied in average group size with the Remington Thunderbolts and CCI Mini-Mags.

Our Team Said: The Ruger's sights and finish upgraded the kit-gun concept, we thought. The low-maintenance stainless-steel finish was a big plus. Though the cost was hundreds more than the used Taurus, we felt the SP101 could be in someone's kit for generations to come.

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

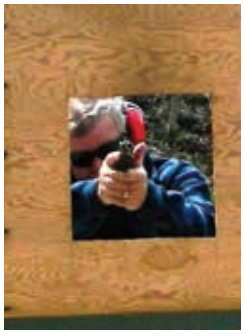
Kimber Tactical Pro Vs. SIG's Scorpion: Two Good Carry Guns

One is the better choice for concealed carry, we think, but the other is filled with high-grade features. The more expensive pistol just may be the better buy, depending on your needs.

In our latest shoot-out between 1911 handguns, we chose two of the most popular 1911s in their respective lineups. Each lists for well over twelve hundred dollars and has a legion of adherents. There are certain subjective differences in appearance that many find attractive, and design features that one shooter or the other may find more desirable. But there are differences in the handguns that will make one or the other the best choice for the individual. This was a shoot-out of the elite among 1911 handguns in some ways, and the pistols were given a thorough test for their compatibility with daily concealed carry. Our test guns were the Kimber Tactical Pro II 45 ACP, which lists for $1317. We paid $1215 for it. The SIG Sauer Carry Scorpion lists for $1213 and we paid $1180 for our test gun. The pistols are each shorter and lighter than the Government Models and are intended for 24-hour carry.



Fired offhand while moving or from cover, the Tactical Pro proved comfortable and accurate. The 4-inch 1911 is proving to be popular, and, in truth, these handguns give up little to the longer-barrel 1911 handguns.



Kimber Tactical Pro II 45 ACP, $ 1317

The Kimber Pro series denotes a handgun with a 4-inch barrel and aluminum frame. The pistol features the standard Government Model grip frame. This style has proven popular with many who wish to carry the handgun concealed. The shortening of the barrel by an additional ¼ inch from the Commander size, and a full inch shorter than a Government Model, means that certain design changes were needed. The barrel bushing is eliminated, and the barrel is a belled type that locks directly into the slide. This allows the barrel to tilt at a proportionately greater angle. First developed, we believe, for use in the 3.5-inch-barrel Officer's Model, the belled-barrel lockup has proven both accurate and reliable, when done properly.

The 4-inch barrel Pro Carry is a popular concealed carry and police service handgun. The 4-inch barrel clears leather more quickly than even a Commander-length-barrel handgun and much more quickly than a Government Model, in the opinions of our shooters. Of particular advantage for shooters with decreased joint mobility, the short 45 ACP is easier on the rotator cuff when drawing from a high-ride holster. The full-size grip frame offers a good grip. The shorter sight radius of the handgun may limit absolute accuracy compared to a Government Model, but we feel that the difference in sight radius at most self-defense distances is inconsequential. Still, among the most accurate 1911 handguns we have tested have been short 45s, and this is one of them. As for the ¼-inch shorter slide compared to a Commander-type handgun, if the Commander pinches you when you sit, then the Pro probably will too.

The Kimber has good features, in our estimation. The fit and finish were excellent throughout. When checking for fitting of the barrel and lugs, the 1911 shooter will notice the feel of the belled barrel is different as the slide is racked. Here, the fit of the link and barrel lugs were deemed excellent. But it was a slightly different feel, and some experience is needed in this regard to properly evaluate the type.

Trigger compression in this new-out-of-the-box handgun was excellent at a clean, crisp 4.5 pounds with no creep or backlash. One of our raters made a

comment that if a 1911 doesn't come with a good trigger, he either passes or installs a new trigger combination from Wilson Combat, Ed Brown, or Cylinder & Slide. He doesn't believe in "fooling with the trigger." There was no need to fool with the trigger on this Kimber, and we should note that only a very experienced pistolsmith should attempt trigger jobs on 1911s. The beavertail grip safety was a good design we found comfortable firing. The beavertail safety released its grip on the trigger about halfway into its travel, as it should. The frontstrap checkering was well executed. Combined with checkered laminated wood grips, the purchase on the gripping area was excellent, with what our shooters said was a good balance of adhesion and abrasion. The purpose of checkered grips and a checkered frontstrap is to improve the grip in less-than-optimal conditions and allow better recovery and control when executing firing strings. This combination did that, in our opinion.

There was a modest magazine well that aided in rapid replenishment of the ammunition supply. While you may not need a speed load, range time goes smoother with the beveled magazine well. In a worst-case scenario, reloading quickly while keeping your eyes on the threat is possible with this handgun.

The slide's cocking serrations were well done. There were no forward cocking serrations. Because the SIG does have forward cocking serrations, the deletion of this feature on the Kimber became a topic of discussion. Forward cocking serrations are intended to allow the shooter to perform a press check, that is, to move the slide to the rear and check for a loaded chamber. The Kimber has a window in the chamber that does the same thing. Also, the forward cocking serration may allow more leverage in clearing a jam. (True jams are rare; malfunctions are not.) The original press check is accomplished by butting the finger against the recoil spring cap, hooking the thumb in the trigger guard, and pressing the

KIMBER TACTICAL PRO II 45 ACP, $1317

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

Kimber's quality control and attention to detail really shine in this pistol. The Kimber Tactical Pro's excellent sights, good frame checkering and excellent, clean trigger press made for a good shooter.



Despite the Kimber's light weight, it was never uncomfortable to fire. Accuracy is excellent by any standard.

Action	Locked Breech Single-Action Semi-Auto
Overall Length	7.7 in.
Overall Height	5.5 in.
Maximum Width	1.5 in.
Weight Unloaded	28 oz.
Weight Loaded	32.5 oz.
Barrel Length	4.0 in.
Barrel	Stainless Steel, 1:16 -Twist
Magazine	8-Rd. Detachable Box
Slide	Steel
Frame	Aluminum
Frame Front Strap Height	2.6 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.2 in.
Grips	Checkered Wood
Grip Thickness (max)	1.3 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.4 in.
Sights	Fixed Iron
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	4.5 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.5 in.
Safety	Slide Lock Safety, Grip Safety
Warranty	1 Year
Telephone	(888) 243-4522
Website	KimberAmerica.com
Made In	Kalispell, MT



The Kimber never stuttered with any load or any magazine. The checkered trigger guard really helped in overall handling. Checkered laminated wood grips improve purchase on the gripping area.



The Clark Fork holster (ClarkForkLeather.com) gave good speed balanced with retention.



The front sight is dovetailed into place. It isn't going anywhere!

RANGE DATA

Black Hills 230-gr. JHP D45N520	SIG Sauer Scorpion	Kimber Tactical Pro
Average Velocity	849 fps	830 fps
Muzzle Energy	368 ft-lbs	351 ft-lbs
Smallest Group	1.8 in.	1.5 in.
Largest Group	2.2 in.	1.8 in.
Average Group	2.0 in.	1.6 in.

Federal 230-gr. HST P45HST25	SIG Sauer Scorpion	Kimber Tactical Pro
Average Velocity	813 fps	790 fps
Muzzle Energy	337 ft-lbs	318 ft-lbs
Smallest Group	1.8 in.	1.2 in.
Largest Group	2.2 in.	1.7 in.
Average Group	2.0 in.	1.5 in.

Hornady 200-gr. XTP H 9112	SIG Sauer Scorpion	Kimber Tactical Pro
Average Velocity	890 fps	867 fps
Muzzle Energy	351 ft-lbs	333 ft-lbs
Smallest Group	1.5 in.	1.4 in.
Largest Group	1.9 in.	1.8 in.
Average Group	1.7 in.	1.6 in.

To collect accuracy data, we fired five-shot groups from a sandbag rest at 25 yards. To capture velocity data, we used a Competition Electronics chronograph with the first skyscreen set 10 feet from the muzzle. ***Ammunition sources and prices:*** *Black Hills 230-grain JHP D45N520 (Midway USA, $18.41); Federal 230-grain HST P45HST25 (Cheaper than Dirt, $32.29); Hornady 200-grain XTP H9112 (Cheaper than Dirt, $15.02).*







Above: The Kimber's upswept slide-lock safety is among the features all of our raters liked. Other features which got a thumbs-up were checkering on the front strap and bottom of the trigger guard.

slide to the rear. The finger is near the muzzle, and the thumb is in the trigger guard. You had better know what you are about if you do this, and we do not recommend shooters use this original press-check method. Forward cocking serrations are necessary for the press check in the case of any handgun with a full length guide rod. The raters debated this feature or lack of forward cocking serrations. A roundtable discussion elicited this information: None of us have actually used the forward cocking serration feature, and we did not feel that the lack of forward cocking serrations on a pistol slide would rate a true demerit.

On top of the barrel, our shooters check-rated the Kimber's sights and sight picture. The night sights were good examples of self-luminating iron sights. The Kimber is among a very few high-end 1911 handguns to use any type of sights other than the Novak; even so, the Kimber design is comparable to the Novak. The Kimber sights were well secured in dovetails.

When firing the pistol offhand, we began with a standard handload using a 230-grain roundnose lead bullet at 830 fps. Using this load in a 28-ounce 45, recoil is there, but the Kimber was fast on target and controllable, we found. The Kimber traversed between targets quickly and gave good results. We used a Clark Fork holster (ClarkForkLeather.com) during the speed work. This is an Avenger-type holster that keeps the handgun snugged to the body by running the belt loop just under the trigger guard in the classic Charles Askins design. With this rig, we found the Kimber to be fast from leather.

At the range, we did run across something none of the raters can recall happening previously. The Kimber and the SIG produced uncannily similar velocities. With a quarter-inch-longer barrel, the SIG might be expected to exhibit slightly higher velocities. But with the handload (4.8 grains of Titegroup under 230-grain Bullets by Chance), velocities were 827 fps and 833 fps for the Kimber and SIG, respectively; 793 fps and 813 fps with the Federal 230-grain HST load, 814 fps and 823 fps with Speer's 230-grain Gold Dots, and 945 fps and 976 fps with Remington 185-grain Golden Sabers. Only with the fast 185-grain loading did the pistols exhibit significantly different velocity.

When the Kimber was fired from the bench rest, accuracy proved excellent. The single-best group was fired with the Federal 230-grain HST. The five-shot group cut a 1.2-inch group, while the average tabulated out at 1.5 inches. This is excellent performance for any 1911, much less a 4-inch duty gun. The worst accuracy — and still good for practice and competition — was 2 inches with the 230-grain handload. The pistol is accurate.

Our Team Said: Overall, there is nothing to fault with this handgun. During the speed or combat portion of the comparison, we ran a half-dozen modern JHP loads through both pistols with good results, using just a magazine of each in either handgun. There were no failures to feed, chamber, fire, or eject. The Kimber's recoil was noticeably greater than the SIG, due to the Kimber's light weight. As a result, firing several strings off the bench rest could become tiring. But the Kimber is less of a drag on the hip at the end of a long day.

SIG Sauer Carry Scorpion 45 ACP, $1213

The SIG Carry Scorpion is another 1911 designed to be shorter and lighter than the Government Model, or in this case, shorter than the full-length Scorpion. The Scorpion is deemed to be a "Carry" model, which means a shorter gun in SIG vernacular, much as Kimber uses the term "Pro" for a shorter 1911. The Scorpion is a 4.25-inch barrel variant that maintains the original Commander-style barrel bushing. Some prefer this, stating greater reliability potential, but the Kimber 4-inch gun seems as reliable as any other handgun. The slide of the Scorpion is markedly different from the Kimber, or a Colt or Springfield 1911. The slide design is intended to preserve the SIG identity and mimic the upraised wedges of the SIG P-series design. That is OK as far as it goes, and branding is an important commercial concern. But the P series uses the SIG-type lockup in which the barrel hood butts into the ejection port. The 1911 Scorpion uses locking lugs. As such, the slightly bulkier slide may be a drawback. The practical drawback is that the SIG slide doesn't fit all 1911 holsters. As such, we skipped the Avenger-type holster for want of a fit and went straight to the Alien Gear IWB holster. (AlienGearHolsters.com) The SIG proved a good fit in that rig. The SIG was fast from concealed carry, but all our shooters agreed the Kimber was faster, probably because it was lighter.

The SIG uses Novak Lo-Mount sights. These are self-luminous sights

SIG SAUER CARRY SCORPION 45 ACP, $1213

GUN TESTS GRADE: B+

The SIG Carry Scorpion is a reliable, accurate, and powerful handgun. The SIG proved quite accurate; it simply wasn't as accurate as the Kimber pistol. The addition of Cerakote coating and a frame rail may cause some shooters to lean toward buying the Scorpion. The G10 scaled grips were a good feature. If you want a 1911 rail gun, then the Scorpion is a good choice.



SIG's Scorpion resembles other SIG products, but it is all 1911 in handling and performance.

Action	Locked Breech Single-Action Semi-Auto
Overall Length	7.7 in.
Overall Height	5.4 in.
Maximum Width	1.5 in.
Weight Unloaded	35 oz.
Weight Loaded	39.5 oz.
Barrel Length	4.25 in.
Barrel	Steel, 1:16 Twist
Magazine	8-Rd. Detachable Box
Slide	Stainless Steel
Frame	Stainless Steel
Frame Front Strap Height	2.6 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.2 in.
Grips	Hogue G10
Grip Thickness (max)	1.3 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.4 in.
Sights	Fixed Iron
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	5.5 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.5 in.
Safety	Slide Lock Safety, Grip Safety
Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Telephone	(603) 610-3000
Website	SIGSauer.com
Made In	Newington, NH



The SIG's ambidextrous safety is much smaller than the Kimber, but it did the job.



The SIG front strap is nicely checkered. The Piranha grips were also highly rated.



The Scorpion's forward cocking serrations are modest and unobtrusive.



The SIG's grips and checkering gave good purchase. The small safety levers were surprisingly effective.

with radioactive tritium inserts in the ampules mounted in the sight. There was no problem with these sights, and we found they offer an excellent sight picture. None of the raters had a clear preference between Kimber and Novak sights.

Cosmetically, the Kimber featured the company's Kimpro finish, while the SIG used Cerakote. We did not do a scratch or corrosion test, but the Cerakote seems durable — we didn't notice untoward wear in the usual places.

The SIG's slide featured forward cocking serrations. They were low riding and far less obtrusive than most designs. We liked them a lot, and feel that they will not unnecessarily abrade holsters. During several dozen rapid presentations from the Alien Gear holster, no problems were encountered.

The Scorpion does not incorporate a full-length guide rod into the design. This makes field stripping less difficult. Both pistols feature an ambidextrous safety. The Kimber was more upswept. The SIG's was actually smaller than the norm, bucking a trend for gas-pedal-sized controls. But they worked just fine, and the safety was positive in operation.

The SIG uses a flat trigger of the type first popularized by 10-8 Performance. We found it worked well in practice, though its compression was heavier than the Kimber at 5.5 pounds. The action was crisp and clean. The frontstrap checkering was crisp and well executed and aided in gripping the pistol. The Hogue Piranha grips were likewise excellent, offering plenty of adhesion in shooting drills. The grip safety was well designed and properly released the trigger when it was depressed about midway. In the case of the Kimber, the grip safety also deactivated the firing-pin block when depressed. This is in contrast to the SIG, which uses a Colt Series 80–style firing-pin block. Our team showed no real preference during our shooting sessions, although the Kimber-type firing-pin block may be less likely to bear upon the trigger action. Neither should be tampered with by anyone not completely familiar with the 1911 and experienced in its operation. To the raters, this means a gunsmithing degree.

During the firing tests the SIG was tractable, with good results on combat-size targets at all ranges. The pistol seemed slightly slower than the Kimber, but recovery in recoil was easier, again probably because of weight. This was also a new-in-the-box pistol. Both were lightly lubricated before firing. The SIG suffered a single break in function, a failure to fully cycle during the third magazine. There were no further failures to feed, chamber, fire, or eject. In accuracy testing, the Scorpion produced acceptable accuracy. The best group was delivered with the Hornady 200-grain XTP with a 1.7-inch group. The SIG did not display the accuracy of the Kimber, but it was clearly an accurate handgun, our testers said.

Our Team Said: The Scorpion is a rail gun. If that is important, the SIG must win. But as a test of carry guns for personal defense, the Kimber is lighter and the Kimber's conventional slide design offers a greater choice in holsters. Other features such as grip adhesion were rated equal. The two makers simply did the job in a different manner. The controls and sights were rated equal. While the lighter Kimber will kick more, this is more noticeable during a long practice session. The SIG kicks like a 45 as well, it just kicks less than the Kimber. But the Kimber carries lighter and was slightly faster from leather.

The Kimber trigger action is better, but the SIG action is good enough for most shooters. The Kimber was more accurate in bench rest testing and more accurate with every load tested. The SIG suffered an archetypical 1911 break-in malfunction, while the Kimber did not, and this must be taken into consideration. The verdict: The Kimber is the better buy for personal defense, even though it cost slightly more than the SIG. The SIG would be the superior belt gun or service pistol.

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

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Which Is Better: 9mm Luger or 45 ACP? Answer: It Depends

We hired John Ervin, president of Brass Fetcher Ballistic Testing, to do head-to-head video examinations of these two favorite self-defense rounds in ballistic gelatin. Which should you carry?

When making the decision to purchase a new handgun, the question of which cartridge it will fire is the first to come up. Readers of Gun Tests are undoubtedly aware of the debate that has raged for a century about which cartridge is better between the 9mm Luger and the 45 ACP. A surface inspection of the question yields some clues such as the tendency of 9mm Luger handguns to hold more ammunition (sometimes double the magazine capacity of a 45 ACP) and 45 ACP handguns to recoil more strongly than the 9mm. The truth is that neither handgun is better in all areas, but I will use some uncommonly seen metrics derived from my slow motion videography to better explain the issue. As a disclaimer, my favorite handgun was a 45 ACP (which I sold, like many people do at one point with their favorite gun), but my carry gun is now a 9mm Luger. I sold the 45 ACP so that I wouldn't fret every morning over which gun to carry.

Common wisdom says that a 9mm bullet (0.355 inch in diameter) *may* expand, but a 45 ACP (0.451 inch in diameter) will not shrink. Great point, since in actual shootings hollowpoints fail to expand about 30% of the time. But how important is the difference of one-tenth of an inch in bullet diameter? If a person were to open his hand, he could fit 144 9mm Luger bullets on that open hand. In the same hand, 60 expanded 45 ACP JHPs can fit. Using a slightly different measure, the frontal body of a 5-foot-10-inch-tall man can be covered by 4520 FMJs or 1875 expanded 45 ACP JHPs. Increasing hit probability by increasing the size of the chunk of lead and copper slightly is not practical, because the bullets themselves are very small.

For a given weight, larger-diameter bullets slow down faster. This makes a safer situation for almost everyone

In Figure 1 below, shooters can see penetration depths between the 9mm Luger and 45 ACP cartridges are comparable, and most are acceptably deep — 12+ inches.

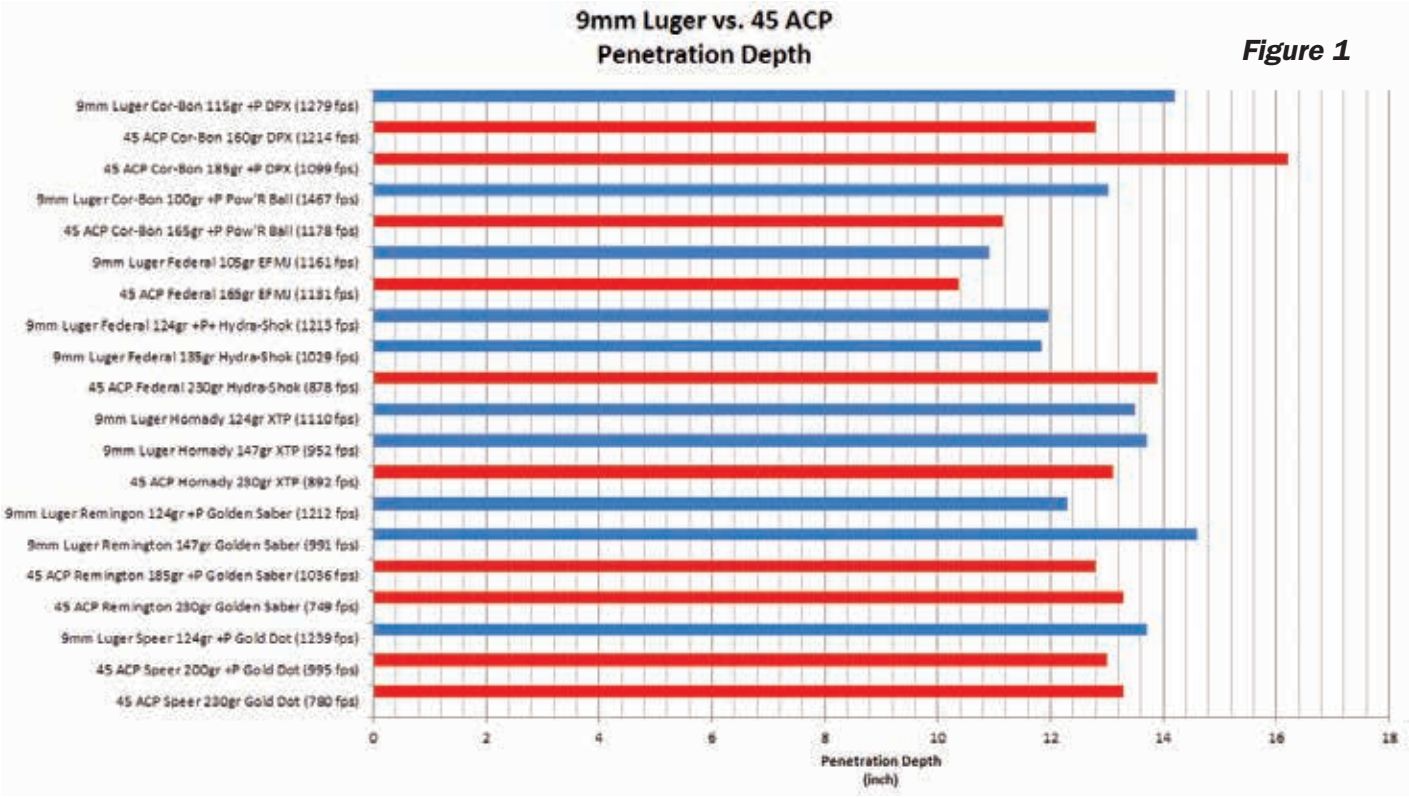


Figure 1

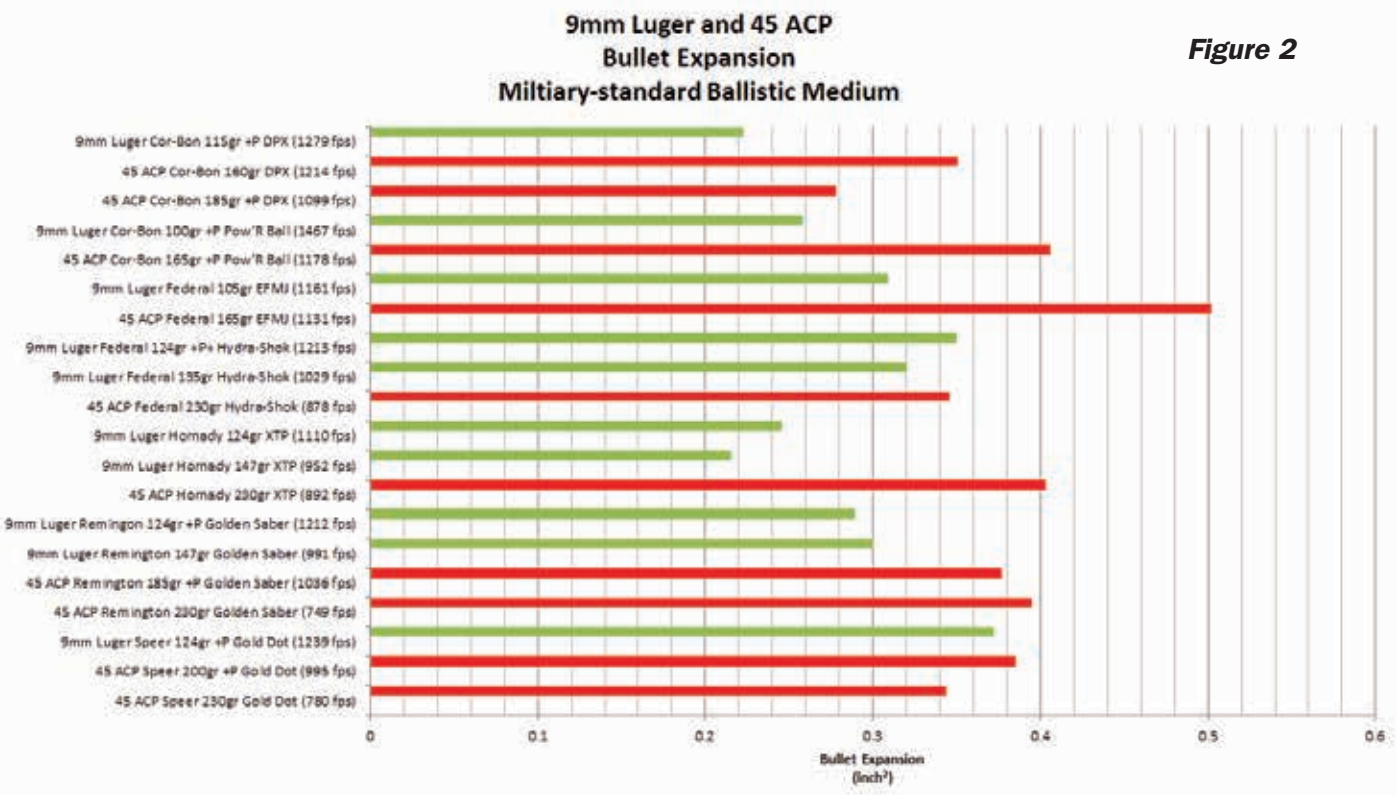


Figure 2







At right, Figure 3 Series: These images show a 9mm Luger Federal Expanding Full Metal Jacket (EFMJ) hitting wallboard to simulate effects on an interior wall. It also illustrates how slow-motion video can be used to measure (visually) how much something is slowed down by hitting a target. In 3A, muzzle velocity was 1124 fps and muzzle energy was 379 ft-lbs as the bullet exits the muzzle. Figure 3B shows the bullet hitting the top of the wallboard frame. Then, in 3C, the bullet is exiting the back of the frame. Residual velocity after hitting the second piece of wallboard was 886 fps and kinetic energy was 235 ft-lbs.

involved because it increases performance and reduces the chances of overpenetrating the target. There is a mechanical limit to how large a hollowpoint can expand to and still stay in one piece. Thus, the 45 ACP will always make bigger holes than a 9mm Luger will be able to do. What is key is to shoot a variety of bullets in your firearm into 10% ballistic gelatin, or water-soaked newspaper if you don't have access to ballistic gelatin. It is essential that the bullets reliably expand and penetrate to the neighborhood of 12 inches deep in either media. Naturally, depending on construction, heavier bullets will tend penetrate more. The most important factor is reliable expansion. If you have the time, place four layers of heavy denim in front of the target and check again for bullet expansion. An expanding 9mm Luger bullet is far more effective than a 45 ACP that failed to expand.

To see how 10 different 9mm Luger JHPs and 10 different 45 ACP JHPs actually performed, Gun Tests hired me to shoot those rounds into law enforcement-standard ballistic media. The test guns were a Walther P38 with a 4.9-inch barrel and a Dan Wesson 1911 with a 5.0-inch barrel. I shot them from a Ransom Rest at a distance of 10 feet from the ballistic media. Bullet-impact velocity and penetration depth are presented in **Figure 1**.

In **Figure 2,** we see that 45 ACP is the expansion winner for most of the ammunition brands tested. Expansion is always desired, but it plays a distant second in importance to shot placement. What matters, given proper shot placement, is the amount of force exerted *by* the bullet *on* the fluid medium — which is equal to the force exerted *on* the bullet *by* the fluid medium and proportional to the amount of damage done to the

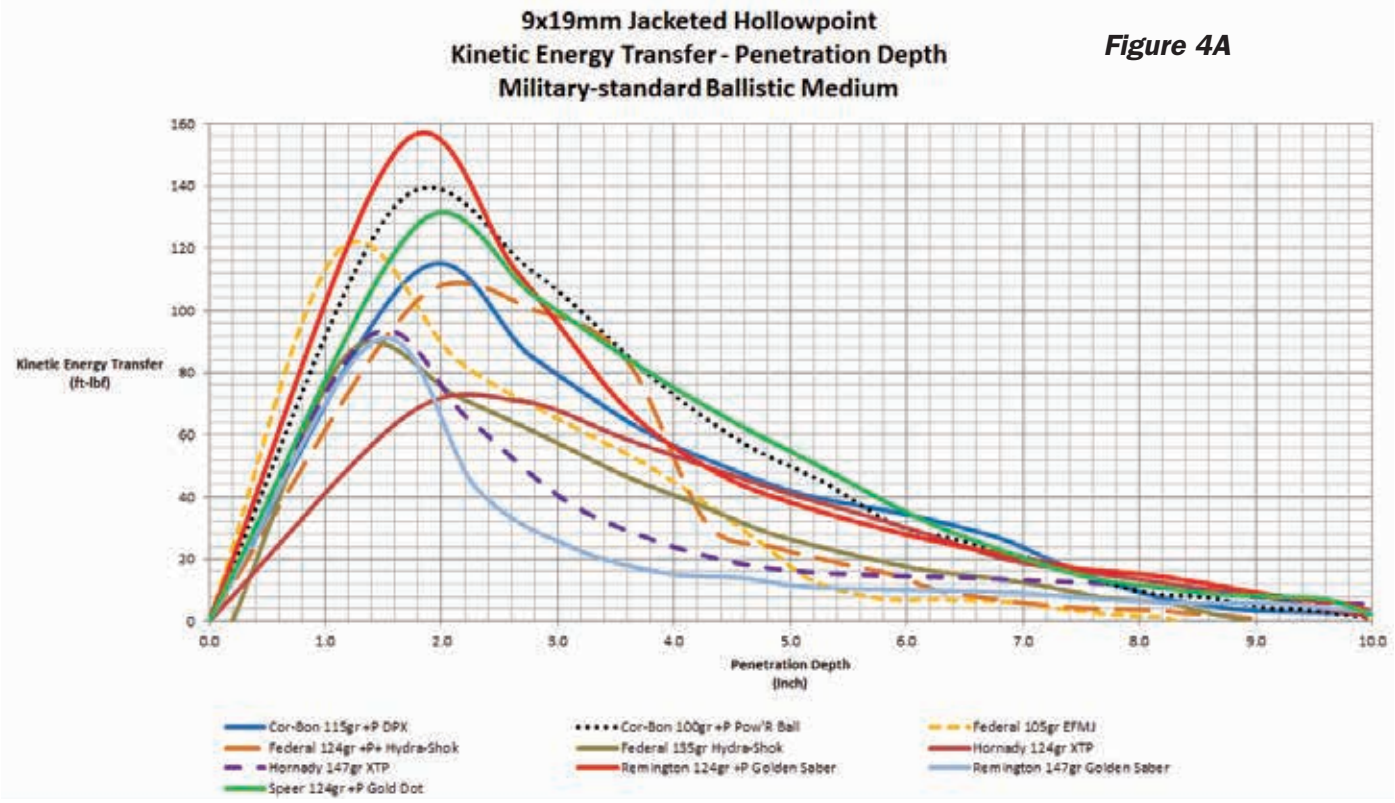


Figure 4A

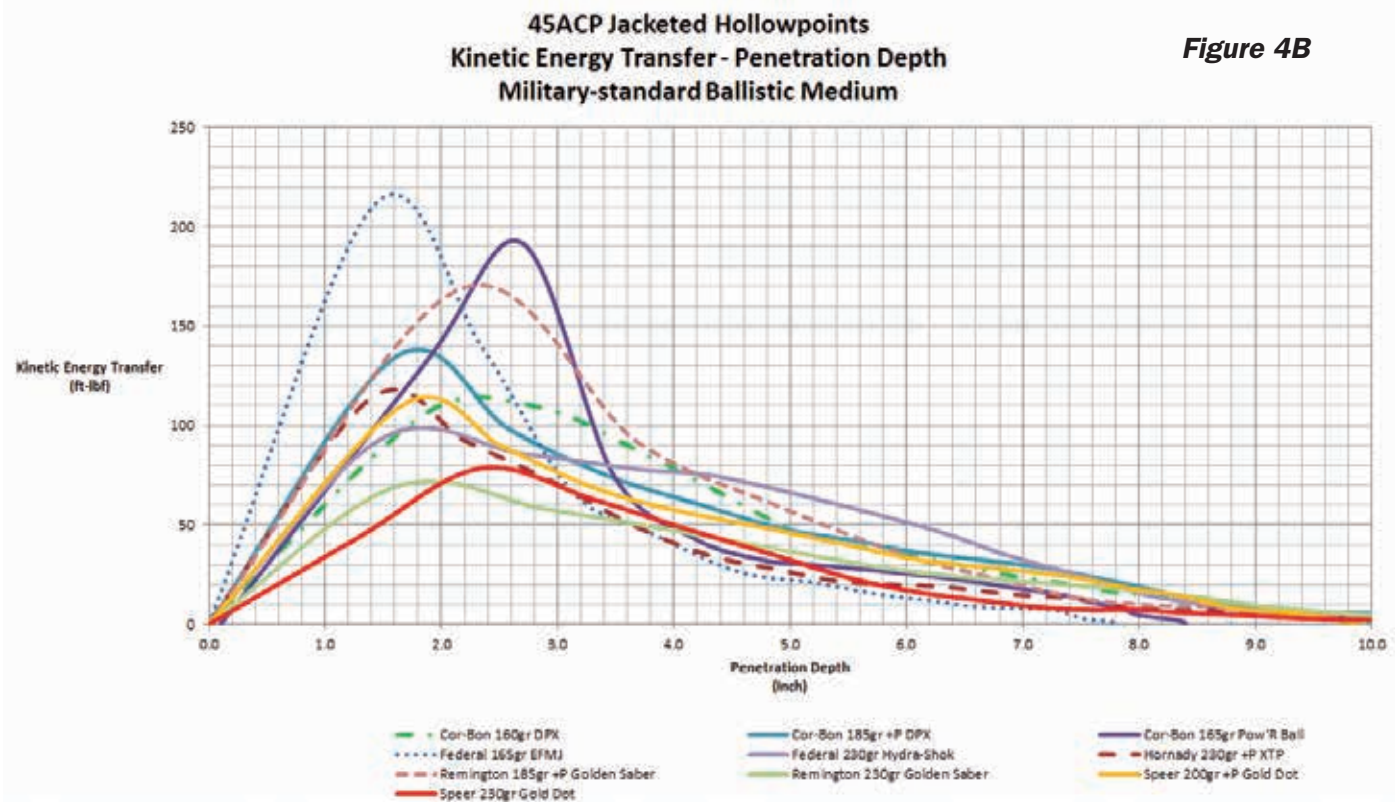


Figure 4B

The graphs above show Terminal Performance of the 9mm Luger samples in Figure 4A and the 45 ACP Terminal Performances in Figure 4B. Note that much more of the 9mm rounds' energy is consumed earlier in the penetration events — that is, they slowed down faster (and had less energy) than 45 ACP rounds. Also, note the maximum energy figure for the 9mm rounds was just under 160 ft-lbs for the Remington 124-grain Golden Saber. The highest 45 ACP energy readings came from Federal's 165-grain EFMJ.

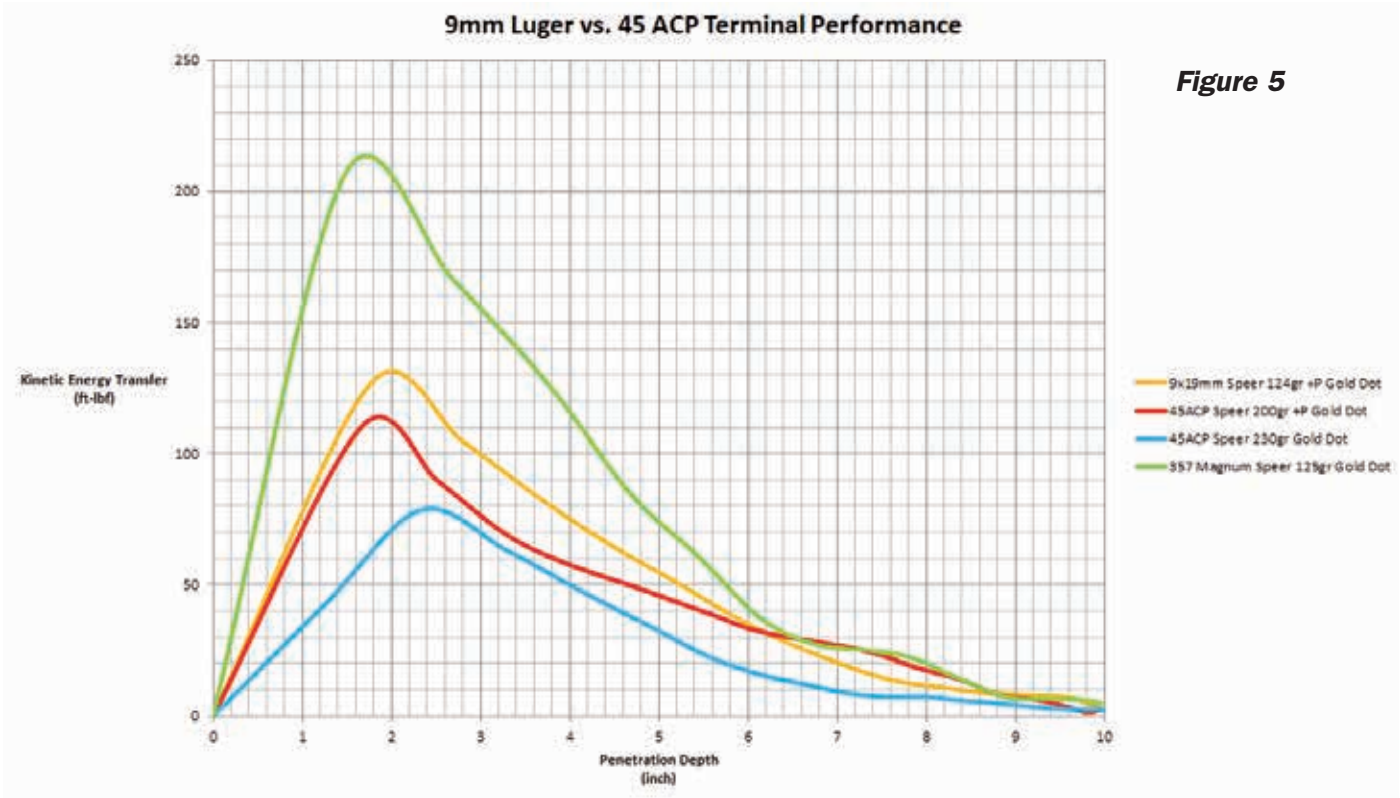


Figure 5



(6a) 0.0000 seconds



(6b) 0.0132 seconds



(6c) 0.0190 seconds



(7a) 0.0000 seconds



(7b) 0.0143 seconds



(7c) 0.0218 seconds

target. The most useful expression of the drag force is the kinetic energy loss in the medium. Slow-motion videos may be measured so that the kinetic energy loss (or transfer) of a given bullet can be determined, assuming that the weight of the bullet is known and the video is of suitable quality for velocity measurement. An example of a Federal Expanding Full Metal Jacket (EFMJ) hitting an interior wall should suitably illustrate this technique as shown in the **Figure 3 series**:

Then, using a military-standard ballistic medium with mechanical properties roughly similar to water, we evaluated the performance of each cartridge. The results show Terminal Performance for the 9mm Luger samples in **Figure 4a** and the 45 ACP Terminal Performances in **Figure 4b**.

For better clarity, let's compare the performances of the Speer Gold Dot across cartridges in **Figure 5**:

The 9mm Luger Speer 124-grain +P Gold Dot hit with an initial kinetic energy of 423 ft-lbf, while the 45 ACP 200-grain +P Gold Dot hit at 440 ft-lbf and the 230-grain Gold Dot impacted at 311 ft-lbf. The expanded diameters were nearly the same, but the 9mm was lighter, so it decelerated more rapidly than did the 45 ACP. The tradeoff is that the 200-grain bullet continued on and was more effective than the 9mm starting at the 6.2-inch penetration depth. Note that 357 Magnum data is included for reference. This is from a 4.0-inch-barrel revolver, and the initial kinetic energy was 560 ft-lbf. A foot-pound of force (ft-lbf) is the amount of force needed to lift a 1-pound weight 1 foot off the surface. That's not much force, but when it's concentrated in a small area like a bullet – look out. Also, terminal force has a corresponding effect — more energy downrange means more recoil.

The first thing that most new shooters realize about handguns is that the 45 ACP kicks hard and the 9mm Luger doesn't kick as much. Both calibers exhibit recoil significant enough to warrant a discussion about how

Figure 8: Cartridge Comparisons	Muzzle Velocity	Muzzle Energy
38 Special Hornady CD 90-gr. JHP	1200 fps	288 ft.-lbs.
38 Super Buffalo Bore 147-gr. +P JHP	1100 fps	394 ft.-lbs.
9mm Luger Cor-Bon 115-gr. +P JHP	1301 fps	432 ft.-lbs.
45 ACP Cor-Bon 185-gr. +P JHP	1096 fps	493 ft.-lbs.
40 S&W Buffalo Bore 155-gr. +P JHP	1300 fps	495 ft.-lbs.
357 SIG Federal Prem. 125-gr. JHP	1367 fps	519 ft.-lbs.
357 Magnum Hornady 158-gr. JHP	1250 fps	548 ft.-lbs.
400 Cor-Bon SD 165-gr. JHP	1300 fps	619 ft.-lbs.
460 Rowland Cor-Bon Hunter 230-gr. JHP	1124 fps	645 ft.-lbs.
10mm Buffalo Bore 155-gr. JHP	1500 fps	774 ft.-lbs.
44 Rem. Mag. Buffalo Bore 180-gr. JHP	1500 fps	783 ft.-lbs.

the recoil affects the speed of a follow-up shot.

The **Figure 6 Series** and **Figure 7 Series** shows frames from slow-motion videography of a Glock 19 (9mm Luger) and a Dan Wesson 1911 firing. The vast majority of modern handguns use the Browning short-action principle, including Glock and 1911-style handguns. All semi-autos must experience a delay, during which the momentum of the slide's rearward motion must be overcome by the recoil spring and the slide begins to be pushed back into battery.

This is a function of the mass of the slide and the spring pressure needed by each cartridge/gun combination for safe operation.

Doing the math, the 9mm handgun remained stalled in recoil (slide fully rearward) for 0.0058 seconds **(Figures 6b–c)**, and the 45 ACP handgun was stalled for 0.0075 seconds **(Figures 7b–c)**. That's a difference of 2 milliseconds, which is important because it confirms that higher-recoiling guns will produce slower follow-up shots, regardless of the skill of the shooter.

When people ask me what is the best handgun for self-defense?, I tell them to choose the hardest-kicking firearm that you can accurately shoot. Assuming a JHP expands and retains its structural integrity, your best bet is to look for the cartridge that produces the greatest kinetic energy at the muzzle. Using real-weapon velocity data from BallisticsBytheInch.com, Figure 7 indicates what muzzle kinetic energy you can expect from actual guns.

Cartridge Comparisons, Figure 8

Handguns are more limited than rifles in that the size of the handgun, and specifically the grip size, is the determining factor in how 'powerful' a cartridge can be used. A handgun must fit your hand comfortably, otherwise the learning curve to good shooting is made steeper – and handguns are unforgiving. If your hand limits you to smaller grips, you will either be looking at a single- or double-stack 9mm/40 S&W/357 SIG handgun or a single-column 45 ACP like a 1911. The good news is that if you want to step up in terminal performance



From left are loads for the 400 Cor-Bon: 165- and 135-grain JHPs, 135-grain Pow'Rball, Blue Glaser, and Silver Glaser.



From left are 460 Rowland loads: 185-grain, 230-grain, and 185-grain Nosler-bullet loads.

(Figure 8) beyond the 45 ACP, it's possible to find 1911s chambered in 40 S&W, for which some loads will beat some 45 ACPs. Likewise, the 400 Cor-Bon and 460 Rowland are usable in a variety of 45 ACP handguns. Gun Tests covered drop-in barrels for those two rounds in the January 2006 issue, and as a result of that experience, the staff recommends factory or gunsmith refits if you want to step up to those two semi-custom rounds. Of course, there are production pistols chambered for the 10mm, which eclipses both the 400 Cor-Bon and 460 Rowland at the top of the pistol-power curve, depending on the loads chosen.

Our Team Said

So which is better: 9mm Luger or 45 ACP? The answer is that they are functionally identical — the target will not know the difference because the difference is so small. They are certainly better choices than the 380 ACP or 38 Special, but no cartridge will ward off evil spirits or drop a guy with a near miss.

So, to find out your top-line personal performance, we recommend shooting the challenging qualification course for the FBI Special Agent starting with a 9mm Luger in that test. Then, then step up to a 45 ACP and see if you can still pass the qualification.

If you want more performance than the 45 ACP and you want to move up further, borrow a friend's 357 SIG and so on until you reach the 10mm or 460 Rowland. Those would be a good maximums to stop at because the physical size of the guns will begin to get onerous to carry.

With strong JHP bullets, the future for rounds hotter than 45 ACP is increasingly bright for those shooters who can handle them. These shooters know that when it comes to terminal performance, you don't get a second chance to make a first impression.

Written and photographed by John Ervin, with additional reporting by Gun Tests staff. See Ervin's high-speed ballistic videography at BrassFetcher.com. **GT**

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SHORT SHOTS



Metro Arms Classic Compact Commander 1911 pistols are now available in the United States for the first time, with affordable MSRPs, between $714 and $812, and lifetime warranties. The American Classic Compact Commander single-action 1911 is built on the compact Officer frame with a full-size Commander slide. Available only in 45 ACP, the Classic Compact Commander has an overall length of 7.5 inches and height of 5 inches. It weighs 34.56 ounces empty and is available in three finishes: hard chrome, deep blue and the duo-tone with a deep blue frame and hard chrome slide. Other features include flared and lowered ejection ports, extended slide stops, beavertail grip safeties, extended thumb safeties, and combat hammers and triggers. Metro Arms American Classic Compact Commanders are produced in the Philippines… **LaserLyte is now making its V4 laser (FSL-4)** in a tan glass-filled-nylon model. The compact handgun laser fits on a Picatinny rail in front of the trigger guard. It's made with a 55% glass-filled nylon body with an inner aluminum core. The V4 Tan laser mounts on a one-inch-or-shorter Picatinny rail with a crossbar screw. An auto-off feature prevents accidental activation of the laser and prevents unnecessary battery depletion. Power Output: 650NM, 5MW, Class IIIA. Weight: .75 ounces. Length: 1.11 inches. Width: 1.08 inches. Height: .76 inches. MSRP: $110.



COMING UP IN GUN TESTS

- Big-Bore Snub-Nose S&W Revolvers in 41 Magnum and 44 Magnum: S&W Model 329PD Alaska Backpacker IV ($750-$900), S&W Performance Center Model 629-8 ($900-$1000), S&W Performance Center Model 657-5 ($750-$850), and a new S&W Performance Center Model 629-6 ($1079).
- AR-15 rifles Head to Head. The Battle Rifle Company BR 4 versus the CMMG MK4.
- Ammo for the AK-47 Accuracy Test.
- 4-inch 6-Shot 357 Magnum Revolvers for Competition: S&W 686 SSR Pro Series Stock Service Revolver and Ruger GP 100 Match Champion Model 1754.

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