TACTICAL RETAILER

June 2015

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(SEE PAGE 6 FOR MORE INFO)

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Editor-**Christian Lowe**
Group Managing Editor-**Hilary Dyer**
Digital Content Manager -**Scott Brown**

CREATIVE

Art Director-**Justin Lancaster**
Traffic Manager-**Scott Nesmith**

ADVERTISING

Group Publisher-**Jared Pfeifer**
Publisher-**Jonathan Edwards**
jonathan@grandviewmedia.com • 205-408-3713
Advertising Sales Manager-**Don Harris**
Advertising Sales Rep-**Mike Kizzire**
Advertising Sales Rep-**Trey Crossno**
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Outside Sales Reps-**Byers Media**

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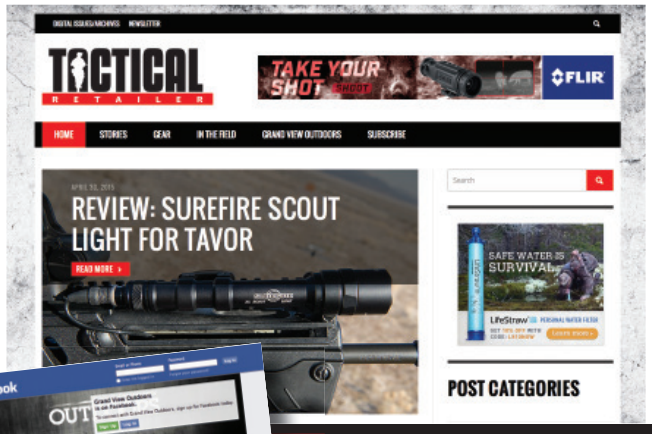
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NEW FROM TROY: KYLE LAMB'S VTAC 7.62 CARBINE

New for 2015 and in partnership with Viking Tactics' SGM Kyle E. Lamb (Ret.), TROY brings forth the VTAC 7.62 Carbine. Joining the globally popular TROY/VTAC line of slings, BattleRails and rail accessories, this is the third rifle designed and manufactured by the West Springfield, Massachusetts-based company to Lamb's exacting specifications and the first in 7.62.

Featuring a custom TROY 15" M-LOK rail and Geissele Super V trigger, the VTAC 7.62 Carbine includes three of TROY's most sought-after 100 percent ambidextrous products — 45 Degree Offset Folding BattleSights, magazine release and charging handle. It ships with a TROY CQB Lightweight BattleAx stock, VTAC sling, and 20-round magazine and is available in Black ($2,350) or Tan ($2,499).

The fluted, match grade 1/11.25" twist barrel comes with a TROY 3-prong flash hider with suppressor mount and is shown here with the new TROY Quick Detach M10A1 Suppressor in 17-4ph stainless steel. TROY suppressors also come in 5.56, pistol calibers, with titanium and screw-on models available.

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RUMINT

News and gossip from around the gun world.

By AWR Hawkins



MIDTERM ELECTIONS GIVE REPUBLICANS MANDATE AGAINST GUN CONTROL

On November 4, 2014, voters gave Republicans a mandate against gun control.

The NRA endorsed 279 Congressional candidates and more than 90 percent won. On the other side, former U.S. Congresswoman Gabby Giffords and Mark Kelly's gun control group Americans for Responsible Solutions spent $10.6 million to endorse 16 candidates, and less than half of them won.

The losses suffered by gun control proponents included the defeat of Sens. Mark Udall (D-CO), Kay Hagan (D-NC), and Mary Landrieu (D-LA) — all three of whom voted for Senator Joe Manchin's (D-WV) gun control bill in April 2013.

Moreover, in gubernatorial races, pro-Second Amendment candidates won the day.

In Texas, NRA-endorsed gubernatorial candidate Greg Abbott (R) won. In Maryland, NRA-endorsed gubernatorial candidate Larry Hogan (R) won. In Alabama, NRA-endorsed Gov. Robert J. Bentley (R) won. In Wisconsin, NRA-endorsed Gov. Scott Walker (R) won. In Michigan, NRA-endorsed Gov. Rick Snyder (R) won. In Nevada, NRA-endorsed Gov. Brian Sandoval (R) won. In Ohio, NRA-endorsed Gov. John R. Kasich (R) won. In Oklahoma, NRA-endorsed Gov. Mary Fallin (R) won. In Wyoming, NRA-endorsed Gov. Matt Mead (R) won. In Idaho, NRA-endorsed Gov. Bruce Otter (R) won. In Kansas, NRA-endorsed Gov. Sam Brownback (R) won. And in Maine, NRA-endorsed Gov. Paul R. LePage (R) won against gun control candidate Michael Michaud (D).

TEEN PULLS GUN, DEMANDS AIR JORDANS, GETS SHOT, KILLED

On Dec. 20, 16-year-old Jawaad Jabbar was late arriving at Ohio's Dayton Mall and missed his chance to get a pair of limited edition Air Jordan athletic shoes, so he pulled a gun on a man who did get a pair and asked him to hand the shoes over. Instead of complying, the would-be victim — a concealed carry permit holder — pulled his own gun and shot the teen dead.

Miami Township Police Chief Jay Phares said: "This was a random act of 'I want something that person has and I'm going to take it from them by any means.' "

WISCONSIN GAZETTE: HIGH TIME TO REPEAL "STUPID" SECOND AMENDMENT

The Second Amendment has protected the right of individuals to keep and bear arms since being ratified in 1791. But on Dec. 28, the *Wisconsin Gazette* claimed the individual right to keep and bear arms was created by the Supreme Court in 2008 via *District of Columbia v. Heller* and that "it is long past time to repeal the stupid Second Amendment."

The Gazette claimed that the "American people are... exhausted by the proliferation of death, of threats, of bloodshed, and [of] the NRA/gun industry moral garbage spewing forth every time someone challenges the ubiquity of guns."

VARIETY MAGAZINE: BY BYPASSING CONGRESS GUN CONTROL LOBBY CAN ALSO BYPASS NRA

In a follow-up to Shannon Watts' admission that her group wins on gun control by going around Congress, *Variety* magazine pointed out that an end-around Congress also allows gun control proponents to bypass the NRA.

On Jan. 5 the magazine explained that the NRA stifles gun control via lawmakers who are pro-Second Amendment. When you bypass Congress as a whole, you bypass the lawmakers loyal to the Second Amendment and specifically loyal to NRA positions as well, *Variety* argued.

ARKANSAS GUN RANGE OWNER BANS MUSLIMS, BUSINESS QUADRUPLES

In September 2014 Gun Cave Indoor Firing Range owner Jan Morgan banned Muslims from shooting at her gun range. By late January 2015 her business had quadrupled, and despite the threat of a lawsuit by the Council on American-Islamic Relations, Morgan is standing her ground.

Morgan said Muslims are banned out of fear for the safety of other patrons and made clear that she would not knowingly allow a Nazi or Ku Klux Klan member to shoot at her range, either.

Gun Cave Indoor Firing Range is located in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

STRICT GUN CONTROL IMPOTENT TO STOP PARIS TERROR ATTACKS

On Jan. 7, France's strict gun control laws proved impotent to stop armed men from entering *Charlie Hebdo* headquarters in Paris, where they killed 12 people.

It is interesting to note that in France a gun owner not only has to pass a background check for the limited types of firearms allowable there, but also has to meet with a doctor once a year to be examined, in what is an ongoing mental background check that lasts as long as they own the gun.

This kind of requirement is something that Gabby Giffords, Michael Bloomberg, and the Democrats running California and New York would love to see instituted in America — yet it did not in any way prevent the attack on *Charlie Hebdo*.

KROGER PROFITS RISE 21 PERCENT AFTER GROCER REFUSED TO BAN GUNS

In mid-August Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America launched a PR campaign in hopes of shaming Kroger into barring law-abiding customers from openly carrying guns in their stores for self-defense. Kroger rejected the request and by Nov. 8 witnessed a 21 percent jump in profits compared to its profit for the same time last year.

NEARLY TWO-THIRDS OF AMERICANS AGREE THAT A GUN MAKES THE HOME SAFER

A Gallup poll released on Nov. 7 showed that "63 percent" of those polled believe a gun in the home makes them safer.

When respondents were divided by political party, Gallup found that 84 percent of Republicans and 64 percent of Independents believe a gun makes their home safer, while only 41 percent of Democrats concur.

And in what can only be viewed as an extremely troubling statistic for anti-gun group Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, 58 percent of female respondents said having a gun in the home makes them safer.

MOMS DEMAND ACTION FOUNDER: WE WIN BY BYPASSING CONGRESS

On Jan. 1 *Salon* magazine published an interview with Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America founder Shannon Watts. In the interview, Watts said America needs more gun control and that the path to securing it includes going around Congress.

Watts compared the pursuit of gay marriage with that of gun control, saying the latter can be secured if pursued the way gay marriage was.

"If you look at how the acceptance of gay marriage came to be in this country, it was just like this; this is pretty much the playbook," she said. That playbook includes "bypass[ing] Congress," pressuring corporations, and going "straight to the state legislatures."

Of course Watts and her group's paymaster, former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, have already shown that when state legislatures won't go their way, they will simply bypass those too. We saw that in Washington state with Initiative 594, an ballot measure banning private gun transfers in that state by expanding the bureaucracy for background checks to every gun sale, whether retail or neighbor to neighbor.

GABBY GIFFORDS' GUN CONTROL GROUP PROMISES TO BE BACK FOR 2016

Just two weeks after being dealt massive setbacks in the midterm elections, Gabby Giffords' Americans for Responsible Solutions pledged they would be back for 2016.

ARS infamously supported anti-Second Amendment incumbent Ron Barber for Arizona's District 2 Congressional seat in November — Giffords' former seat — only to see Barber defeated by pro-Second Amendment candidate Martha McSally (R-AZ-2).

The group spent $2.3 million in that one race alone.

Giffords' gun control group is currently seeking advice for how to better sell their message and is attempting to raise funds as well.

PRINCIPAL: STUDENTS CAN THROW CANS OF CORN AT GUNMEN AS "LAST RESORT"

Alabama's W.F. Burns Middle School principal Priscella Holley suggests students bring canned vegetables — corn, peas, etc. — to school to be stockpiled in classrooms and used for self-defense in the event of an attack.

The Associated Press reported that Holley sent a letter home to parents in which she said: "We realize at first this may seem odd; however, it is a practice that would catch an intruder off guard." She believes "the canned food item could stun the intruder or even knock him out until the police arrive."

BLACK FRIDAY 2014: NEARLY THREE BACKGROUND CHECKS EVERY SECOND

On Nov. 28, Black Friday gun sales boomed, with nearly three background checks taking place every second.

There were 97,848 background checks during 2008: George W. Bush's last year in office. From there the number of checks began climbing, eventually hitting 154,873 in 2012, after Democrats openly pushed gun control.

Although West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin's gun control was defeated in April 2013, background checks remained up — registering in at 144,758 on Black Friday 2013.

According to the FBI, the final tally on the number of background checks on Black Friday 2014 was well over 175,000.

NEW YORK SENATOR WHO PUSHED GUN CONTROL NOW PUSHING MACHETE CONTROL

New York state senator Tony Avella (D-Queens) successfully pushed gun control via the SAFE Act in January 2013, and he is now pushing new laws for machete control.

On Feb. 19 the *New York Daily News* reported that Avella was pushing new laws following two machete attacks in New York — one in July and a second in October. A 17-year-old was killed during the July incident.

"The fact that anyone can purchase this potentially lethal tool is just crazy," Avella said.

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE: GUN SALES DRIVEN BY 'SCARED WHITE GUYS'

On Dec. 3 the *San Francisco Chronicle*'s Mark Morford claimed gun sales in America were driven by "scared white guys" who "don't read complicated books."

Morford described Black Friday gun buyers thus:

You do not read complicated books. You do not like new or weird things. You watch lots of TV, mostly Fox News, which rejoices in showing you endless images of angry foreigners and minorities in pain: tear gas explosions, fights in the streets, looting, this time involving sad, small-town black people in Ferguson, all of them protesting the acquittal of a murderous white cop.

In his last sentence, Morford was referencing the grand jury's decision that Ferguson, Missouri, police officer Darren Wilson would not face charges in the shooting death of Michael Brown.

THE CAGE

1 S.O.TECH SURVIVAL SLING

S.O.TECH's Survival Sling is a two-point weapon sling with multiple secondary rescue and load-carrying functions.

Made from Mil-Spec parachute-grade webbing, the Survival Sling is rated for 2,000 pounds and is configured for use as a two-point adjustable rifle sling. It utilizes an AustriAlpin buckle as the quick-adjust slider, and flat hooks are supplied for quick attach and detach from the weapon. Foam padding sewn into the shoulder strap adds comfort. When removed from a weapon, the Survival Sling has use as a load-bearing strap for carrying items such as water or ammo. It can also be configured as a drag strap, body lift strap and more.

- Available in Black and Coyote Brown
- Comes with two H&K hooks, one strength-rated carabiner
- Made in the USA

WEBSITE: www.sotechtactical.com
MSRP: $79

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2 SUREFIRE XC1 WEAPON LIGHT

The XC1 is the smallest, most compact pistol light ever developed by SureFire.

The XC1 features a recoil-proof LED with an output of 200 lumens. It's made from aerospace aluminum with a hard anodized finish and is gasket sealed for weatherproofing. Its small size is designed not to extend past a Glock 19 barrel or be wider than the frame, making it perfect for concealed carry.

- Powered by a single AAA battery
- 1.5 hour runtime
- Ambidextrous controls

WEBSITE: www.surefire.com
MSRP: $300

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3 5.11 TACTICAL EVO BOOTS

The next evolution in the 5.11 Tactical boot line, the EVO is a lightweight boot designed for stability and performance in a tactical environment.

The EVO boot is a tactical boot with a 14mm heel-to-toe drop, which provides a responsive feel and encourages a more natural stance. The dynamic cushioning system features D3O impact protection in the heel and an OrthoLite strobel board. Waterproof models come with eVENT membranes, which are designed to be waterproof, breathable and resistant to bloodborne pathogens. The EVO boot comes in both 6-inch and 8-inch heights.

- Full, non-metallic construction
- Fully stitched, slip and oil resistant outsole
- Available in Black

WEBSITE: www.511tactical.com
MSRP: $114.99 (side zip 6-inch), $124.99 (side zip 8-inch), $134.99 (waterproof 6-inch),$144.99 (waterproof 8-inch)

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4 GERBER GEAR MP1-AR

Building upon the success of the eFECT tool, the MP1-AR offers both AR-15 maintenance tools and everyday field tools in a single package.

The MP1-AR is a full-sized multitool with a full complement of tools necessary to maintain an AR-15 rifle. These tools include a pin punch, contoured carbon scraper and a dental-style carbon pick. The accompanying 12-piece bit set has torx bits, hex bits, Phillips bits, a front sight adjustment tool and a trigger assembly pin punch. Additional tools include needle nose plier jaws, a wire cutter, a wire stripper and serrated and fine edge blades.

- Comes with a MOLLE-compatible Coyote nylon sheath
- Magnetic bit driver which accepts standard size bits
- Built in Portland, Oregon

WEBSITE: www.gerbergear.com
MSRP: $153

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5 CMMG MK47 MUTANT

CMMG's Mk47 MUTANT fuses the reliability of the AK and the accuracy of the AR-15 into a single rifle, chambered for the proven 7.62x39mm cartridge.

The Mk47 MUTANT is a specially designed rifle platform, combining aspects of the Kalashnikov and AR-15 platforms into a single weapon. The 7075-T6 billet aluminum upper and lower receivers are designed specifically for use with the 7.62x39mm cartridge, as is the unique bolt carrier group, which is derived from the AR-10 group. A full-length Picatinny rail runs the top of the weapon, allowing the user his preferred choice of sights and optics.

- 16.1-inch free-floating barrel with a 1:10 twist
- Carbine-length direct impingement gas system
- Accepts existing AK magazines
- Features CMMG's RKM KeyMod handguard for compatibility with many rifle accessories

WEBSITE: www.cmmginc.com
MSRP: $1,499.95 - $1,849.95

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6 EOTECH 558

EOTech's 558 Holographic Sight combines aspects of the 512 and EXPS sights into a reliable, night-vision-compatible optic.

The 558 Holographic Sight features the AA battery compatibility of the 512 with the side buttons and quick-detach mounting base of the EXPS model sights. It utilizes the A65 reticle, with a 65 MOA ring and a single 1 MOA dot. The 558 is fully compatible with the Laser Battery Cap and Laser Battery Cap 2. It is also magnifier-compatible.

- 1,000 continuous hours of operation at setting 12 w/ lithium batteries
- 30 brightness settings
- Waterproof to 10m

WEBSITE: www.eotechinc.com
MSRP: $629

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THE CAGE

7 CZ-USA SCORPION EVO 3 S1 PISTOL



CZ's popular Scorpion EVO 3 submachine gun is now available in a semi-auto pistol configuration for the civilian market.

The Scorpion EVO 3 S1 pistol features a polymer frame and is chambered for 9mm parabellum, with a blowback-operated action. The integral quad rail configuration allows for the attachment of various accessories, including optics and sights. It comes standard with low-pro sights, and the rear has four aperture sizes.

- Optional Arm Brace Adapter for use with pistol stabilizing braces
- 7 3/4-inch barrel
- Ambidextrous controls

WEBSITE: www.cz-usa.com
MSRP: $849

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8 MAGPUL MBUS PRO LR ADJUSTABLE SIGHT

The MBUS Pro LR is a rear iron sight with toolless adjustment out to 600 meters for precision and ease of use.

Made from corrosion-resistant steel, the MBUS Pro LR sight is elevation-adjustable out to 600 meters. Like the MBUS Pro, the Pro LR is also windage-adjustable and features a dual aperture design. Positive detents ensure the MBUS Pro LR stays at standard AR sight height when deployed.

- Adjustable from 200 to 600 meters in 50-meter increments
- Compatible with Picatinny rails
- Low profile when stowed

WEBSITE: www.magpul.com
MSRP: $130

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9 GEMTECH THE ONE SUPPRESSOR

GEMTECH's The ONE suppressor is designed for multi-caliber functionality, rated up to .300 Win Mag on a 24-inch barrel.

Part of the Extreme Duty line, The ONE suppressor is designed for use with multiple calibers, from .17 HM2 all the way to .300 Winchester Magnum, with a recorded sound reduction of 32 decibels. It's been tested with full-auto 5.56 with a 7.5-inch barrel. It's made of titanium and Inconel for strength and reduced weight. The ONE is compatible with either an interchangeable quick mount or thread mount.

- Length: 7.5 inches
- Weight: 16.3 ounces
- High-Temp Black Cerakote finish

WEBSITE: www.gem-tech.com
MSRP: $1,025

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10 BENCHMADE 6800 AUTO APB

The 6800 is Benchmade's first Ambidextrous Push-Button Automatic knife that allows for reliable operation with either hand.

The 6800 features the Auto APB system, which is, according to Benchmade, the first truly ambidextrous push-button automatic knife. This system features buttons on both sides of the handle that pop the blade up to the locked position. The drop-point-style blade is made from 154cm stainless steel, and the handle is black anodized 6061-T6 billet aluminum with stainless steel liners and a carbine glass breaker.

- Blade length: 3.52 inches
- Open length: 8.64 inches
- Reversible tip-up pocket clip

WEBSITE: www.benchmade.com
MSRP: $275 - $290

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11 MAGLULA RANGE BENCHLOADER

The Range BenchLoader allows shooters to effortlessly load a 30-round 5.56 AR-15 magazine in a single stroke.

Made from reinforced polymer, the Range BenchLoader allows users to load up to 30 5.56 or .223 rounds into a magazine using the single-stroke loading action. Its heavy-duty design easily allows for hundreds of magazines to be loaded daily. Its design also reduces wear and tear on magazines by keeping the feed lips intact.

- Great for competitive shooters, ranges, and ammo and firearms manufacturers
- Fits most AR-15-compatible 5.56 and .223 magazines
- Round counter included on front
- Comes with a carry bag for portability

WEBSITE: www.maglula.com
MSRP: $165

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12 ORIGINAL S.W.A.T. H.A.W.K. BOOT

The H.A.W.K. (High Agility Weight Kinetics) Boot is designed to utilize natural bodyweight movements to improve agility, speed and safety.

The H.A.W.K. Boot is a 9-inch waterproof side-zip boot with a durable leather and nylon mesh upper. It meets the EN ISO 20347 standard for occupational footwear with fuel oil resistance and SRC-rated slip resistance. The H.A.W.K. outsole features arch ladder grips and toe grips for climbing. It is oil-resistant and exceeds the ASTM F489-96 safety standard for slip resistance. Further features of the boot include H.A.W.K. HydroGuard waterproof full bootie construction, AEGIS antimicrobial protection and bloodborne pathogen resistance. The H.A.W.K also has an airport-friendly Flex-Lite molded nylon stability board.

- Waterproof Coyote variant coming third quarter 2015
- Gusseted tongue keeps dirt and debris out
- Tactical performance nonslip laces
- Removable custom-fit EVA insole with PORON cushioning pads

WEBSITE:
www.originalswat.com
MSRP: $119

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THE CAGE

13 DOUBLE ALPHA SHOTMAXX TIMER

The SHOTMAXX timer lets you add stress to your shooting practice to help hone your skills.

Let's face it, there's no better way to practice tactical shooting skills then to inject a bit of stress. Save for a drill instructor yelling in your ear, adding a timer to the equation can be the best way to force some standards into the equation.

But shot timers tend to be big and clunky and serve only one purpose.

Enter the Double Alpha SHOTMAXX wristwatch shot timer, a lightweight, multi-functional option for your customers who want the latest in competition technology. Shooters can start the timer using a button or an internal accelerometer that will start the device when the shooter raises his arm to draw.

Of course, the SHOTMAXX also tells time, date and acts as an alarm clock and stopwatch.

- Two types of start delay options
- Par setting
- Two beep tones
- 10 levels of sensitivity
- Indoor range filter

WEBSITE: www.doublealpha.biz
MSRP: $149

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14 LWRC SIX8 A5

The Six8 A5 is LWRC's first rifle-length 6.8.

When someone asks about piston-driven ARs, it's hard not to immediately think of LWRC International, the Cambridge, Maryland-based manufacturer of high-end modern rifles, SBRs and innovative personal defense carbines.

While LWRC is a dyed-in-the-wool piston gun maker, it's also one of the few companies in the market that's gone full bore into the 6.8 SPC cartridge.

The 6.8 does have a small hunting following as well, though 300 Blackout (and 6.5 Grendel) is starting to make inroads. But that hasn't stopped LWRC from specializing in what it's good at, and the new Six8 A5 is the company's first rifle-length 6.8 with some pretty awesome features that LWRC has become known for.

- Caliber: 6.8 SPC
- Weight 7.3 lbs.
- Length 34 inches
- Barrel: 12.7", 14.7" and 16.1"

WEBSITE: www.lwrci.com
MSRP: NA

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15 RUGER MINI-14 TACTICAL RIFLE IN 300 AAC BLACKOUT

The Mini-14 now comes in one of the hottest calibers going.

This newest version of the Mini-14 rifle features an optimized gas port that reliably cycles with both supersonic ammunition and subsonic ammunition when a sound suppressor is installed. The rifle weighs approximately 6.75 lbs., features a 16.1", 5/8"-24 threaded barrel with a 1:7 twist rate, and is supplied with two 20-round detachable box magazines.

The Mini-14's cold hammer-forged, medium contour, alloy steel barrel and receiver feature a matte black oxide finish. The barrel comes with a Ruger flash suppressor, which can be removed to attach sound suppressors or other threaded barrel accessories. The rifle's stock is made of a rugged and durable glass-reinforced nylon.

- Protected, non-glare, post front sight
- Receiver-mounted adjustable ghost ring rear sight
- Picatinny rail
- Ruger integral scope mounts; Ruger scope rings included

WEBSITE: www.ruger.com
MSRP: NA

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BERETTA'S TWO-FISTED PISTOL PUNCH

With the new APX and a redesigned M9A3, the Italy-based pistol company is hedging its bets to keep the U.S. military handgun contract and wow consumers with big sales.

By Tom McHale

We've been hearing about the U.S. Army Modular Handgun System selection process for years. Some months it appears to be moving forward, others, not so much. What is clear is that the fleet of Beretta M9 pistols is aging, and sooner or later, they'll have to be replaced with something.

Beretta is clearly intent on retaining its position as the primary sidearm supplier to the U.S. military. Earlier this year, Beretta introduced the M9A3 pistol as an Engineering Change Proposal in accordance with the terms of the current M9 contract. The idea behind this maneuver was to bypass a risky selection process battle by meeting most Modular Handgun System requirements with an updated version of the M9 pistol design already in service. That's a clever competitive strategy that could conceivably make the selection process a moot point.

The move would present a clear story of saving taxpayer dollars by sticking with the same basic platform: same training, similar armory parts and procedures, same ammunition, and mostly compatible accessories like holsters and rail gear. As of this writing, the Army has formally rejected the proposed design change under the ECP program, but political decisions are never so cut and dry. I wouldn't count on this story ending just yet, as it's questionable whether the Army has the funds to buy all new pistols. I suspect Beretta is counting on Congress applying some pressure on the military to make the cost-effective choice.

The Beretta APX represents an alternate path to winning a new military contract should selection of an entirely new pistol proceed. Technically a better overall fit to the admittedly changing requirements of the new Modular Handgun System, the APX design has much more flexibility to meet the evolving technical requirements.

Let's take a closer look at each option.



THE BERETTA M9A3

With the M9A3 platform iteration, Beretta chose to focus on the most impactful MHS design requirements while moving ambiguous and evolving spec requirements (like caliber) to the back burner. The move is a practical one, as much of the production expertise, tooling and process remains pretty much the same.

At a glance, the M9A3 looks very much like the M9 pistol. Like the original M9, it's got an accessory rail, but this one is a three-slot MIL-STD-1913 Picatinny one instead of the single-slot version of the prior model. When I had the opportunity to fire this at SHOT Show, the biggest difference I felt more than noticed was the new grip design.

You might remember the Beretta Vertec, a variant of the Beretta 92. It featured what appeared to be a more vertical grip angle, but was really a change in the grip shape. Unlike the standard Beretta 92, the Vertec series had flat back straps, so the feel was more vertical. As another result of the grip shape, the trigger reach was also noticeably shorter than the 92 series. The out-of-the-box configuration of the new M9A3 features the Vertec-like grip with shorter trigger reach too. On the M9A3, you can easily replace the standard grip panels with a wraparound grip that provides a similar feel to that of the Beretta 92 and M9A1 pistols. I have large, but not extra large, hands and have no trouble with the standard M9, but I also liked the new style. It was definitely not too narrow and I found the more "vertical" alignment pointed naturally for me. I would have no trouble moving from an M9A1 to an M9A3 immediately. The operation of the action is the same, so there is no learning curve as there would be moving to a double-action-only, single-action or striker-fired pistol.

Beretta has improved the sights, with tritium night sights a standard feature. The front sight is now mounted with a dovetail instead of machined directly into the slide. This means you can easily swap it for different styles, like an XS Big Dot. As the barrel is threaded for suppressor use, you might think Beretta should have just included tall sights right

off the bat. Personally, I think they did it right. As of now, in law enforcement, military and civilian circles, suppressor use on a handgun is a small minority configuration, so why stick everyone with tall and ungainly iron sights? They're easy enough to swap if you want.

Speaking of suppressors, the standard configuration has a threaded barrel with thread protector screwed on. Beretta M9s have always had enough barrel extending past the slide to add threading, but that requires fairly skilled gunsmithing work to get a perfectly square thread platform for the addition of a silencer.

The magazine design has also been improved with a more tapered and sand-resistant shape. You'll note that the M9A3 comes in a desert tan color. Cool, and possibly handy for blending into the standard military desert uniform colors a bit better. I have to admit it just looks cool to me. I like the color.

THE BERETTA APX

The APX is a whole new deal for Beretta. Unlike existing military and law enforcement offerings from the company, the APX is a striker-fired design. In some ways similar to the Sig P250 and Sig P320 pistols, the APX is designed around a serialized chassis. The fire control mechanism can be moved to different frame, barrel and slide combinations with relative ease. This is the heart of the APX's potential entry as a Modular Handgun System competitor.

Three years in development, the APX was announced at the International Defence Exhibition & Conference in Abu Dhabi in February. While the product is targeted at the military and law enforcement market, Beretta intends to release commercial versions of the APX later in 2015.

Setting aside all the technical details, there are two big differences with the M9A3 that the APX offers. First is the striker-fired firing system. It's a big departure from the double-action/single-action operation of the current M9 pistols. Second is the capability for multi-caliber configuration. The same serialized chassis can be reconfigured to operate different calibers. Initially, Beretta will manufacture barrels and slides for 9mm (9x19), .40 S&W, and 9mmx21 IMI calibers. Capacity of the 9mm model is 17+1, while the .40 S&W and 9x21 IMI hold 15+1.

You can bet Beretta has .45 ACP designs on the bench should the MHS selection process winds shift in favor of a return to the big .45.

Normally, caliber changes for law enforcement organization and military units are a big and infrequent deal, in part because the process almost always requires a gun platform switch. Yes, products like Glocks, Sig's P226, and Smith & Wesson M&Ps have similar models of varying calibers, but the switch involves a complete gun replacement. In Sig's case, the new P320 is one example of a modular system where the same serialized chassis can be equipped with parts supporting a different caliber. In the modular chassis scenario, you save the cost of replacing the fire control system (in theory), and items like accessory lights, lasers and holsters might not require an upgrade. Of course, that assumes you're making radical dimension changes like switching from a full-size handgun to a subcompact model.

Another noticeable design change that I'm interested to try out with and without gloves is the slide serration. Actually it's not really serration, and there is delineation between front and back serrated areas. The entire length of the slide is covered with wide, nearly 1/2-inch cutouts. Raised ridges separate the recessed areas, and the pattern extends along the entire length of the slide, only interrupted by an area for a Beretta logo on the left and ejection port on the right. I suppose the idea is to grab the slide anywhere and get the exact same feel and purchase. It looks neat, but time will tell whether it's a practical change or cosmetic feature.

I toured the Beretta factory in Gardone Val Trompia, Italy, in early March and was not able to see the new APX, so one can assume that current models are design prototypes that might change during the testing phase. The APX is currently in pre-series testing with expected qualification complete date early in the second quarter of 2015.



The APX is a striker-fired design. The same serialized chassis can be reconfigured to operate different calibers.

APPLES AND ORANGES

If these pistols went head to head in the Army trials from a clean-slate perspective, I have little doubt that the APX, should it live up to its design specs, would beat out the M9A3. Not because it's "better," but because it's more able to meet changing mission and qualification requirements. The M9A3 has certainly addressed some of the big issues like grip size flexibility and configurable iron sights. However, with the exception of a potential future .40 S&W variant, it's still a one-caliber gun.

Just the continued press over the Army Modular Handgun System selection process results in big sales opportunities for participating manufacturers. After all, the commercial market always wants to buy the same gear used by law enforcement and military. It's clear that Beretta is betting big, so stay tuned. **TR**

USE COMPETITION TRAINING TO IMPROVE TACTICAL SHOOTING

Military and law enforcement shooters have a different set of challenges to train for, but lessons from the competitive shooting world can help your schoolhouse build those students into much better shooters.

By Brandon Wright

All too often on the range I hear "tactical" shooters complaining about how competitive shooting is all just a game.

They usually say: "This isn't real life," and "if bullets were really flying back you would not be standing out in the open like that."

The simple fact is that they're right. Competitive shooting is a game with a score, a timer, and a winner at the end. There are no tactics, just shooting. So how could competitive shooting benefit a "tactical" shooter?

As a professional firearms and tactics instructor at International Training Inc. and a member of Team Smith & Wesson, I get the unique opportunity to work with a wide variety of shooters. I've worked with people who've never fired a gun and with high-end operators, and people at every skill level in between.

The one thing they all have in common is that they want to be able to shoot faster with better accuracy. When it comes to shooting, it all boils down to being faster and more accurate than your opponent.

I would say that "tactical" or "tactics" is a means of solving a problem rather than a way of shooting.

When it comes to "operations," military and law enforcement shooters have to be good at a lot of things, not just shooting. Shooting is just one piece of the puzzle. Skills range from learning mapping programs and technology familiarization to close quarter's battle and jumping out of an airplane.

All these different skills call for different levels of mastery within each of the skill sets. Slacking on just one element could mean the difference in life and death. The problem is, you never know what you will be faced with. The unknown is always just around the corner.

Competitive shooters have much less to worry about. Shooting alone is hard enough for most people. It's a process comprising multiple skills that you must do over and over to become really good at. Without having to be good at a lot of different things, competitive shooters can focus more on breaking down skills in shooting during practice.

So what changes in tactical shooting versus competition shooting? The biggest differences I see that directly relate to shooting are the differences in mindsets, some of the techniques used, and the equipment worn.



Let's take a look at the mindset. In a tactical world, you must have a survival mindset. I will always remember the phrase "I will survive and keep going no matter what." This is taught to motivate you to never give up, no matter how bad it gets. I have said that phrase in my head more than once as a Virginia State Trooper.

The focus is more set on how to accomplish your mission without getting killed. Time is usually on your side. We are taught that if you rush into a situation, you're more than likely going to miss something that will get you or your team hurt. Planning is always a big part of a tactical operation, although surprises happen all the time. You must be fluid to change and be able to adjust on the fly.

A competitive shooter's mindset is slightly different. Focus and memorization is first on the brain here. Since you get to see the course of fire prior to shooting it, you can really take the time to evaluate how you will tackle challenges that are presented on the stage. Focus on where the targets are, where the gun needs to be, and what positions you need to be in to best address the targets presented. Pre-planned positions and reloads help with driving that total time down.

Next let's take a look at some of the techniques used. In either arena, the techniques have to be as close to flawless as possible. Whether you're actively engaging a threat or in the middle of a stage, speed and accuracy are just as important in either situation. With that being said, your techniques can't work some of the time — they have to work all of the time.

From a tactical perspective, techniques such as use of cover and slicing the pie become lifesavers as you negotiate obstacles. Another area that differs revolves around the types of reloads used — including tactical reloads, speed reloads and slide-stop reloads.

Techniques have to work in the most extreme environmental challenges. For example, mud, sand, sweat, blood, extreme cold and extreme stress are some factors that tactical shooters have to be aware of.

The way I teach a student to reload in a tactical class is different from a competitive class. Tactical classes are taught a "sling shot" style reload. I teach this method because under stress, your heart rate rises and you lose fine motor skills and must rely on gross motor skills. Pushing the slide stop would be an example of the use of a fine motor skill. By sling shooting the slide, we are utilizing more gross motor skills, therefore maximizing your performance.

I find students perform better under stress when this method is taught. This method benefits the shooter in a couple of ways. One, it doesn't matter if you are right- or left-handed; no time is lost. Secondly, both the reload and clearing of malfunctions become easier, as the techniques are close to performing the same movements. And no matter what handgun a student shoots, this technique works well. A hesitation at the wrong time can get you killed.

As for competition, the speed of a reload is just as important. However, the speed doesn't come from the stress of death, it comes from how you perform on the stage. Incurring a loss of time can really hurt your overall score. A different technique must be used in order to obtain the fastest time.

In a comparison of a sling shot reload versus a slide lock reload, I lose approximately a half of a second. Now in a tactical situation, that's not always a big deal. For competition, however, every reload is on the clock. If I lose a half of a second on every reload and have to reload 10 times, at the end of the match I'm behind by 5 seconds. That could be a determining factor whether I win or lose.

If you are a tactical guy and currently train this way, I'm not saying you are wrong by any means. Just practice and be in tune with what is happening with the gun should you release the slide before the magazine is fully seated.

Now let's look at the differences in equipment used. The equipment tactical shooters have to use can sometimes be restrictive. Holsters can have retention; magazine pouches can cover over three-quarters of the magazines and sometimes have a flap to cover it. Ballistic vests and plate carriers can also weigh you down and restrict movement. Tactical shooters typically are not able to modify their weapons or ammunition, so they shoot a stock pistol and use factory ammo. All of these can be contributing factors and could add time in a match.

Equipment for competitive shooters is drastically different. Holsters typically do not have retention; gear is lightweight and made for speed. Modifications are done to weapons on a routine basis. Modifications such as compensators, red dots, larger magazine wells, lightened recoil springs, match barrels and trigger jobs are routine changes competitors make. Does this give you an advantage? Most definitely. If it didn't, do you think so many shooters would do it?

So back to the original question, how could competitive shooting benefit a "tactical" shooter?

If you take my qualification scores from 1999 and compare them to what I



RANGE REPORT

> Finding something that forces you to shoot as fast as you can, as accurate as you can, and under some sort of stress is a positive. You have to set your ego aside and work on skills that will improve your performance for the arena you play in. Where you place in the match doesn't necessarily matter, but you should always be evaluating your performance.

qualify with now in 2015, they have not changed. I still shoot in the 90s and 100s for all my weapon qualifications. So, does that mean that I have not improved in my shooting?

To someone who takes qualifications as a form of creditability, the answer would be no. However, my shooting is 100 times better now. In fact, in the last six years, I have gone from Expert to Distinguished Master in IDPA, advanced from Unclassified to Grand Master in USPSA and won three national titles.

Finding something that forces you to shoot as fast as you can, as accurate as you can, and under some sort of stress is a positive. You have to set your ego aside and work on skills that will improve your performance for the arena you play in. Where you place in the match doesn't necessarily matter, but you should always be evaluating your performance.

Questions you should ask yourself are:

Did I improve my overall speed with the same accuracy?

Did I get in and out of shooting positions fast enough or faster than before?

Where am I identifying weaknesses in my performance?

Am I happy with my performance (not comparing my performance against everyone else in the match)?

Remember, competitions are games, and just like all games, there are tricks to them. Until you are shown the tricks and have an understanding of what it's all about, you might struggle. The most important thing about it, win or lose, is what you learned from the experience.

Nothing would please me more than to see guys shooting USPSA matches in their "battle rattle." Stop trying to win the match, throw the standings and ranking out the window and go see what you can do in the gear you fight in. Take away from the match what you experienced and how to better your skills for what you do.

Bottom line: The more you repeat a skill, the quicker you can make it a habit. Habits then can be executed without your conscious mind thinking about it, which makes you faster.

Competitive shooting drives you to be fast and accurate. What you have to take away from a competitive match is your performance, your manipulations, and how you handle the speed and accuracy. This part of it could in fact, save your life. **TR**



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BLACKHAWK! AT A CROSSROADS

Since its inception in the garage of Navy SEAL Mike Noell, BLACKHAWK! has grown into one of the largest tactical product companies in the world. We find out what it's like to be a part of the new Vista Outdoor brand and where the company sees the tactical market heading.

By Rick Sapp

It has one of the most memorable names in the outdoor and tactical industry. And it's all caps with an exclamation point! Your high school English teacher would have been unhappy seeing this on a homework assignment, but America's consumers have rallied to BLACKHAWK! The company has developed a broad product line and shows no signs of letting up in adding products to its line.

BLACKHAWK! has grown in part because of smart, engaged management during a climate where all things "tactical" with a hint of "black ops" are suddenly cool. And let's not forget the company's incorporation into Alliant Techsystems.

ATK is a giant in the outdoor and tactical world but is evolving, splitting its sporting side away from the global — even orbital — defense and aerospace division to become Vista Outdoor. Independent, publicly traded, and very different companies.

According to a January ATK press release, Vista will "design, manufacture and market consumer products in the growing outdoor sports and recreation markets" from its headquarters in Utah. With approximately 5,800 employees in the U.S. and around the world, Vista reported pro forma 2014 sales of $2.3 billion.

Well-known brands included under the Vista umbrella are Federal Premium, Bushnell, Savage Arms, BLACKHAWK!, Primos, Uncle Mike's, Hoppe's, RCBS, Alliant Powder, CCI, Speer, Champion Targets, Final Approach, Gold Tip Arrows, Weaver Optics, Outers, Bolle, Cebe and Serengeti.



BLACKHAWK! headquarters

Tactical Retailer sat down with energetic BLACKHAWK! Brand Director Chuck Buis to ask about this corporate evolution, how corporate developments will affect the BLACKHAWK! brand and what the business people in tactical and sporting goods can expect in the future.

TR: Chuck, your experience in tactical and consumer sporting goods is deep and impressive. Will you review it for us?

Buis: I was director of law enforcement for Michaels of Oregon (Uncle Mike's) for 10 years, from 1993 to 2003, before I moved to BLACKHAWK! Of course it was Blackhawk Products Group then, but at Michael's I was in charge of company efforts in the law enforcement market including all sales, product development, marketing and media relations. I also supervised three regional managers and five independent rep groups with 26 reps.

In 2003 I went to work for Blackhawk as senior product marketing manager and have been with the company through several management and corporate changes. In the spring of 2010, ATK bought the renamed BLACKHAWK!, and I became brand manager in 2012.

TR: What does a "brand manager" do?

Buis: I direct the efforts of individual product marketing managers across all of the BLACKHAWK! lines. I coordinate their work with product development staff and our overall marketing activities, ensuring these align with corporate goals.

TR: How does BLACKHAWK! cope with such a diverse line? I mean, you manage everything from bright red bags for EMS responders to tactical flashlights to sledges and battering rams.

Buis: As I said, we have dedicated product managers for each division. One guy, for instance, does nothing but holsters, belts and duty gear. There are two people for boots, apparel and protective gear — goggles, gloves, kneepads and so on. And one guy for tactical nylon and knives.

TR: Doesn't that make BLACKHAWK! more of a distributor than a manufacturer?

Buis: No, we make our own stuff. The factory in Manhattan, Montana, specializes in injection molding, although they

do some metal machining and assembly there. Other stuff is spread through Vista's diverse facilities. Dynamic entry tools, back-up iron sights and metal machining, for example, in Oroville, California. Warehouse and assembly operations are located in Meridian, Idaho.

TR (looking at map of the U.S.): Manhattan, Montana? I can't find it on the map. That's got to be a pretty small place for such a big business.

Buis: It's 20 miles northwest of Bozeman. The day we opened the factory we immediately became the biggest employer in town.

TR: Chuck, BLACKHAWK! is now part of Vista Outdoor, an ATK spinoff. What does Vista bring to the table? What do you expect to result from being part of Vista other than access to deep pockets, for instance, and maybe more corporate bureaucracy?

Buis: Deep pockets are important when you're trying to expand your product offering. Here's an example.

We used to work in a 17,000-square-foot factory in Bozeman, but we needed more space. We'd grown to the point where we were bursting at the seams. We had knocked walls out several times, more than the zoning law really allowed, and the factory had kind of taken over the parking lot to the point that we needed to rent parking spaces from the company next door.

The size limited us and we needed a new facility. When we approached ATK they told us to go ahead and build one. That's when we built a new 80,000-square-foot facility in Manhattan. Just the mezzanine of the new building is bigger than the old factory in Bozeman. Having that space allowed us to go from eight to 32 molding machines in about a six-month period.

Aside from deep pocket financial resources, Vista Outdoor has a broad distribution network. At BLACKHAWK! I could get a little attention from Cabela's and some of the major distributors, but when ATK or Vista rolls in to talk, we meet with the senior people. Being part of a big, powerful company lends a certain gravitas to your efforts.

TR: The Blackhawk.com website says BLACKHAWK! is a "portfolio-based consumer branded products company." What does that mean?

Buis: Essentially it means that within the ATK/Vista business sphere, we're a division with a certain portfolio of commercial responsibilities. We're not primarily a Defense Department global contractor, although we have that capability. We're part of the sporting group, and that includes ammo .50-caliber and smaller as well as accessories for the shooting sports and law enforcement communities.

We sell to consumers through distributors and independent dealers. Ours is a much different business model than the aerospace and defense products from ATK, which are oriented to the Defense Department. We sell, for example, through Pickett Weaponry in Newberry, Florida, or Lipsey's in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.



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Within the "old ATK," the problem was that sporting group companies had to abide by the same rules as the aerospace and defense group, and that sometimes made things difficult. I think the move to Vista Outdoor will be very good for BLACKHAWK! because we can be more flexible, better able to customize our consumer-based business model.

TR: How do you mean?

Buis: Well, as part of Vista Outdoor we'll be more independent, with a budget that doesn't rely on profitability generated in the aerospace and defense sectors.

TR: So an independent retailer can use the BLACKHAWK! brand effectively?

Buis: I was in Bob's Gun Shop in Norfolk the other day and they have 20-foot display wall just of BLACKHAWK! and they carry all the other Vista stuff, too. Bob's belongs to a buying group that saves time and money by getting our brands into stores at the most economical price points for them.

TR: Are there any special new things you want to mention?

Buis: I just met with a distributor about two things they hadn't noticed at SHOT.

What we call our QuickMod Magazine Cases are quick-draw magazine pouches for fast-paced competition like 3-gun matches that require shooters to very quickly, intuitively access multiple magazines for pistols and AR-15s. BLACKHAWK! QuickMod cases have a quick-detach belt attachment with 360-degree angle adjustment. They're temperature- and crush-resistant injection-molded polymer and adjust to different belt sizes. Plus, the cant angle can be set to fixed or movable. The pistol model fits both single- and double-stack magazines with built-in tension adjustment. The AR-15 model holds most styles of 20- or 30-round AR magazines.

BLACKHAWK! QuickMod Magazine Case



The other product is our new Diversion Rolling Load Out Bag. It's a big travel duffle with a hidden, padded full-length firearm compartment. It has a muzzle pouch and retention straps so you can secure a rifle inside. It's a discreet-looking bag with lots of webbing and loop panels to attach and organize accessories. It's rated to 200 pounds of gear.

TR: What's the one thing you want retailers to remember about BLACKHAWK!?

Buis: I do lots of dealer product training and I want them to remember our story.

BLACKHAWK! was founded by Mike Noell, who was a member of SEAL Team 4. Mike was in the field during the first Gulf War when his backpack failed in a minefield. He'd jumped off a rock and the pack split open along a seam. Those guys carry 100 pounds of gear, and at the time he weighed maybe 150 pounds. When the seam split a smaller bag with his night-vision goggles tumbled out and came to rest about six inches from a trip wire leading to a mine.

Anyway, examining his backpack later he realized it was a low-bid government item and decided he could do a better job of protecting himself and his buddies. When he got home he enrolled in a navy rigger's course, one that taught how to repair gear.

Pretty soon he was taking his stuff apart and re-stitching and reinforcing it. Then he did it for his buddies, splitting seams and putting stuff back together. Pretty soon he had bought material and a heavy duty sewing machine and began actually building his own stuff, backpacks and gun cases. Things he understood from his field experience. By the time his SEAL hitch was up he was



Diversion Rolling Load Out Bag

working 60 hours a week for the Navy and 60 hours on his own sewing machine, and his wife gave him an ultimatum. He decided to get out of the service and in 1993 founded Blackhawk.

His first show as Blackhawk took place at the old secret service matches at Rowell Training Center in Beltsville, Maryland, outside Washington. Actually, that's where I met him. I remember because it was the same month I started with Uncle Mike's and he used a table next to me. He was so broke that Bill Strang of TSSI let him use half of a 6-foot table to sell Blackhawk stuff. I think he even slept on Bill's Holiday Inn room floor.

TR: That's a great story, but what jump-started BLACKHAWK!?

Buis: A couple of things kicked off BLACKHAWK! Growth, and all of them have to do with military guys.

First, SWAT teams sometimes train with the military, and SWAT guys wanted the same kind of gear. That demand caused us to get dragged into the commercial market faster than we expected. And military guys getting out of the service wanted to use in their personal lives what they had in service. They asked for BLACKHAWK! because they heard it was quality stuff from somebody who had been there, and retailers started calling. I think people have become more aware and appreciative of the military.

The idea that people needed to be responsible for their own defense, for taking care of themselves and their families, spurred the tactical civilian market. Then we had the 3-gun explosion where using tactical gear gave competitors an advantage.

And there's serendipitous stuff like Brad Thor mentioning BLACKHAWK! gear in his Scot Harvath thrillers. That attracts consumer interest, and I guess it all just came together.

TR: It's quite a story, Chuck. Looking ahead, what's the future of "black" and "tactical?" You mentioned the stir Uncle Mike's created at a 1990s SHOT Show by displaying a few law enforcement items. Is the hunting market disappearing in the 21st century?

Buis: No, the hunting market is going strong, but women are the hot growth segment.

TR: So what's next for you personally? More responsibility?

Buis: I'm having a wonderful time and yes, I have some added responsibilities. When ATK bought Bushnell, Uncle Mike's became part of my world again, showing that God, indeed, has a sense of humor, as 11 years after leaving Uncle Mike's I now have them again — or at least their tactical accessories. My title this week is product director for tactical accessories, so all the product managers that manage the various BLACKHAWK! and Uncle Mike's product lines report to me.

We're a dynamic company in a fast-changing industry. Next week, who knows! **TR**

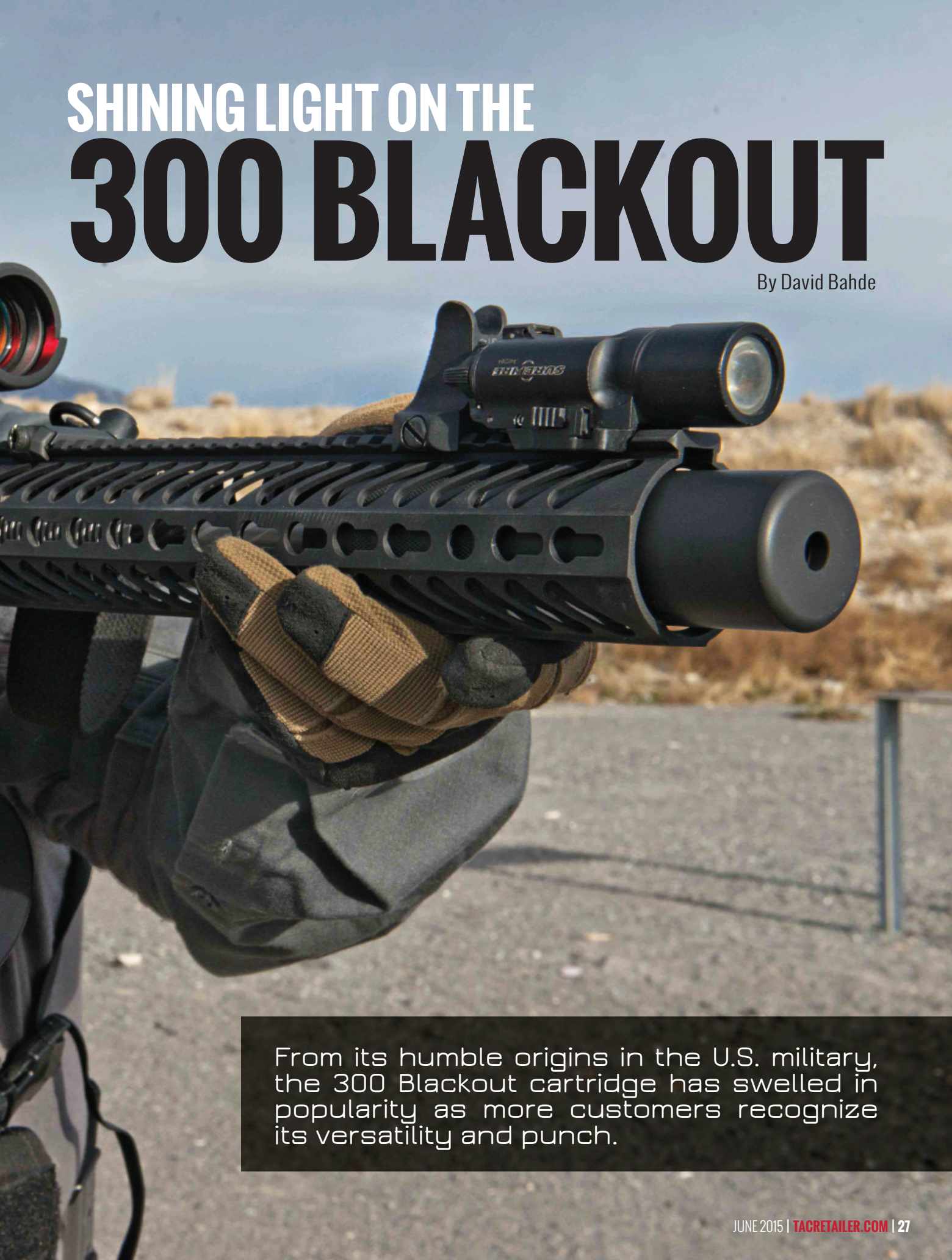


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Aimpoint.

SHINING LIGHT ON THE 300 BLACKOUT

By David Bahde



From its humble origins in the U.S. military, the 300 Blackout cartridge has swelled in popularity as more customers recognize its versatility and punch.

300 BLACKOUT



From its military origins, the 300 BLK has found increased popularity among civilian shooters and hunters.

One of the most difficult things retailers do is try to "read the tea leaves" when it comes to the next hot cartridge.

Every few years there is an improvement on an existing mainstream round, and most are just minor adjustments geared toward very small markets. Often termed "wildcat" cartridges, they typically appeal to the reloader, hunter or target shooter and comprise little inventory. Investing as little as possible keeping customers happy without breaking the bank is the best course.

It's when they become mainstream that things get interesting. Investing heavily can be costly if it turns into a fad. Ignoring it can drive customers to other stores and cost you sales.

Some good examples include the 6.8 SPC for rifles and .357 Sig for pistols. Early hype sold lots of both, followed by near obscurity. The .357 Sig is slowly but surely disappearing, and the 6.8 SPC has experienced a resurgence — much like the 10mm pistol round.

So what's the difference? All started as military or law enforcement cartridges. All improved on existing parent cartridges.

It can all be summed up in one word: versatility. The ability to reach a broad market and meet numerous needs.

TACTICAL SELLS, AT LEAST FOR A WHILE

There is little doubt anything "tactical" sells, at least for a while — with the AR being the poster child for this phenomenon.

As a patrol sergeant looking for rifles in the 90s, I had two choices. Most retailers had no idea what they were, let alone stocked them. Hunters shook their heads wondering why you would own one.

The much-talked-about ban of the AR, followed by appearances in movies, television and video games and the eventual expiration of the ban, served to increase their popularity, and sales soared.



Removing the initial ban slowed sales, but the "tactical" tag stuck. Entire markets grew around the platform existing to this day. More attempts at restrictions drove sales again, then the engine lost steam.

Compared to the craziness during ban paranoia, sales are slow, but they still exist. So what's keeping them going? Hunters, and the well-orchestrated media and industry campaign turning them into the "modern sporting rifle."

Focus is moving from "operator" mode to competitor or hunter mode. With 3-gun and similar competitions on the rise and guns built to meet hunting needs, sales are remaining steady without the impetus of gun bans. It's all about versatility, and the latest "new" cartridge might be the best example yet.

Enter the 300 BLK (Blackout).

SO, WHAT IS THE 300 BLK?

Many mistakenly compare this round to the 6.8 SPC, but the only similarity is their development within the U.S. military and the M4 as the original platform.

When the military wanted a longer-range cartridge using the M4 rifle, it came up with the 6.8 SPC — intended to be a 500-yard cartridge. Designed around the 16-inch barrel, it outperformed the 5.56mm NATO in every category.

Along with typical logistical and political issues, its primary downfall was the need to change the bolt and inability to use millions of magazines already in inventory.

While the 300 BLK can perform similarly in many conditions, its original design was exactly the opposite.

The 300 BLK cartridge has its more common roots as a rather obscure wildcat cartridge, the 300 Whisper. But as a wildcat round, it suffered the fate of similar rounds that weren't put into the mass market. Manufacturers who initially locked into contracts still make it, but those contracts are ending, relegating it to relative obscurity.

It took Advanced Armament Corporation to change this, along with a request from the military. Altering the design made it a mainstream cartridge void of royalty payments; the new 300 BLK has its begin-

nings in the Special Missions Units of our military. Its primary purpose was to replace the 9mm HK MP5SD (suppressed) sub-machine gun.

The few MP5SDs in military inventory are decades old and are being removed from service. It has served well and fits several mission requirements — especially those where range is limited and silence critical.

A replacement was required, so why not use the M4, which is standard throughout the services? Using a 6- to 9-inch barrel on standard M4 receivers, bolts and magazines using the 300 BLK meant a simple barrel change.

Built to be fired with a suppressor, it is essentially a sub-gun using a modified rifle cartridge on an actual M4. Properly tuned, it performs this job incredibly well — much better than the weapon it replaced. Bullets in the 200- to 240-grain range fired at about 1,050 fps make these very effective close-range weapons. These guns work well suppressed with short barrels, exponentially better than similar 5.56mm weapons.

If that's all they did, the story would end there. Much like the 6.8 SPC, look outside the original intent and it becomes a versatile cartridge reaching a broad range of users, far more than the 5.56mm NATO and even the 6.8 SPC.

300 BLK – NOT JUST FOR NINJAS!

For those able to afford and legally own a suppressed short-barreled rifle capable of shooting subsonic ammunition, they are a ton of fun. It is a fantastic platform to sell suppressors. While incredibly quiet, the recoil rivals a .22 long rifle. Limited to subsonic rounds, most 9mm pistol suppressors will even work.

Just be careful, as the rifle will shoot supersonic loads, and many 9mm suppressors will not. It is a solid sales opportunity for customers already in possession of sub-gun suppressors knowing the limitations. Or, it's a chance to carry new suppressors like the Liberty Mystic X that will handle full-power loads.

Ammunition companies are starting to make subsonic ammunition designed to expand. Still, as a practical matter, most overpenetrate and underexpand, making it mostly fun time at the range. It does this well for sure, but it's not the sweet spot to generate sales. Moving to rifle suppressors and full-power ammunition gets you the best from this platform.

Most 300 BLK ARs tuned to run subsonics reliably will not run supersonic ammunition well — despite the marketing. Having tested several, I can tell you it is generally an either/or proposition. Even so, adjusting between the two is pretty simple. Most of the time a simple swap of buffers or springs will do it.

For complete versatility, adjustable gas blocks are the ticket. Take that same tactical "ninja" rifle, turn down the gas, swap in an H2 (or similar) buffer, add a rifle suppressor and purpose-built self defense ammunition, and you have what might be the perfect home defense AR.

Unlike most 5.56 NATO guns, the 300 BLK suppresses reliably, operating with very short barrels using simple and inexpensive direct impingement systems. Using a 9-inch barrel, my Seekins Precision SBR is dead nuts reliable with almost



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CLOSER LOOK AT THE LAW TACTICAL GEN 3 FOLDER

As the AR rifle has moved into the mainstream for self-defense use, more customers are searching for solutions to make the rifle more compact. Shorter barrels certainly help, and the popularity of pistols in rifle calibers – especially 300 BLK – has been a game changer.

The only real limitation has been the buffer system. Being unable to fold the stock limits the AR's ability to become significantly compact. Hybrid designs that eliminate the buffer tube work, but they tend to be heavy. What customers really needed was the ability to fold a factory AR buffer tube without affecting reliability.

And it looks like Law Tactical has done just that.

Our early testing of the Law Tactical Gen 2 folder has so far been solid. It worked with most every AR, including select-fire weapons. But it did demonstrate a few shortcomings. Its aluminum construction lacked strength, and its size interfered with the charging handle. It also required tools for teardown when cleaning.

But Law Tactical says its latest Gen 3 addresses all those issues.

Reengineered from the ground up, it is now built from steel for strength. That allowed the company to trim it down, eliminating interference with the charging handle.

It also means the AR will fire with the stock folded. It won't cycle, but it will fire without damaging the rifle or folder. If the need arises, you can then fold it back into place and cycle the action, and you are good to go. The hinge is more solid, and it locks solidly in place.

Maybe the best part is the new extension. Using a replaceable O-ring, it fits easily in standard bolt carriers – no need for indexing or use of tools.

After I tested it on a Seekins SBR in 300 BLK it has become a permanent fixture to that weapon. Using a 9-inch barrel and Elite Iron Battledog Suppressor, it is incredibly compact. Function is flawless and it fits in many nontactical-looking bags with ease.

Previous testing on an LWRCI Six 8, Colt M16, and AR-10 yielded the same results. Attaching it to an AR pistol makes it about as compact as it gets.

If you want to add to the versatility of any AR pistol or rifle on the shelf, stock the Law Tactical Gen 3 folder. Installation is easy, and your customers can make either a new or their existing AR fit just about anywhere necessary. It allows you to build what might be the perfect AR for self or home defense.

precision accuracy. Loaded with 110- to 125-grain expanding bullets, it provides optimum wound ballistics.

Barnes Tac-X bullets are common, although 125-grain Nosler and similar are impressive in gelatin. Using Remington's 125-grain match, it shoots at 1/2-MOA with consistency out to 300 yards. Even with a 9-inch barrel, it holds its own against the 6.8 SPC using shorter barrels out to 300 yards. It delivers similar energy at the muzzle as a 14.5-inch M4 in 5.56mm.

Adding several .30-caliber rifle suppressors, it remains very quiet even in close quarters. Recoil is all but nonexistent. Add something like a Law Tactical Gen3 folding mechanism and you get a compact powerhouse. To me, this is the clear sweet spot for the cartridge and provides the most versatility.

HUNTING WITH THE 300 BLK

Generally, failing to make the jump to hunting signals the death knell for most specialty military cartridges. Making that transition kept the 6.8 SPC afloat, driving most of its market today. In the last year or so, the 300 BLK is making that transition nicely, providing an entirely different market for retailers.

Given the range of .308 hunting bullets that will work, loads designed for hunting deer, hogs, coyotes and other small- to midsized game are becoming widely available.

Think of it as a .30-30 out of an AR — soft-shooting, accurate, with solid energy on target, it is a great hunting cartridge.

Turning your existing .223 AR into a 300 BLK requires a simple barrel change. Utilizing a .223 bolt and AR magazines makes the transition easy and inexpensive. Stocking barrels, even with freshly fitted bolts, is a moneymaker.

Being able to swap them out is also a solid sales opportunity. Given little ballistic advantage to longer barrels, 16- to 16.5-inch barrels keep the rifle handy for hunting. Most factory 110-grain bullets sent downrange at 2,400 fps or so can be very accurate. Moving to 125-grain bullets, velocities hover in the 2,100 to 2,200 fps range — impressive for a small AR. And its ability to work in any .223-based action increases its versatility.

Today, just about every mainstream manufacturer offers a bolt rifle in this caliber. Without AR reliability issues, moving from subsonics to supersonic ammunition is seamless. Our extensive testing using a Remington SPS Tactical dropped in several stocks yielded some impressive results. Many avid hunters are moving to the 300 BLK for hunting inside 300 yards. Recent advances in expansion using subsonic loads seem promising, adding another other variant to the hunting capabilities.

RIFLE-CALIBER PISTOLS

One of the latest crazes is the rifle-caliber pistol.

While recent ATF decisions concerning the SB-15 Pistol Stabilizing Brace use may impact sales a bit, rifle-caliber pistols remain the hot ticket this year. Most are chambered in .223 — neither the most effective nor reliable round when barrels get this short .

Given its initial design to be used with a pistol-length gas block, the 300 BLK is perfect for this weapon. Ballistics are far superior to the 5.56mm, reliability is better and they suppress easily, offering a usable pistol with viable terminal ballistics.

RELOADING THE 300 BLK

If you already load .223 or 5.56mm ammunition, making the transition to 300 BLK is downright simple.

Using 300 BLK brass, it is just a set of dies. Converting .223 brass requires some trimming. Beyond that it is pretty much the same.

Using less powder than the .223 in most cases is generally cost effective. As things settle down from last year's frenzy, it's getting less costly quickly. Utilizing .308 bullets, the 300 BLK accepts proven hunting versions from 110 to 125 grains. Practice ammunition is often loaded with 147-grain bullets, while subsonic loads go as large as 240 grains.

Fitting in standard AR magazines, it is very generous when it comes to overall length. Generally, if they fit in the magazine, they load, and short bullets seem to work just as well. It allows you to load everything from cost-effective practice ammunition for range use to higher velocity hunting and target rounds exhibiting excellent accuracy.



A number of companies now offer bolt guns in 300 BLK.

300 BLK IS HERE TO STAY

No rifle round is the "perfect" or "best" anything. They all serve a purpose with varying strengths and weaknesses.

Replacements for the 5.56mm NATO and .223 have come and gone with regularity over the years. Most provided advantages with noticeable or costly shortcomings. With problems ranging from proprietary magazines and ammunition to reliability and accuracy issues, they all either failed or experienced marginal success.

Retailing them was problematic at

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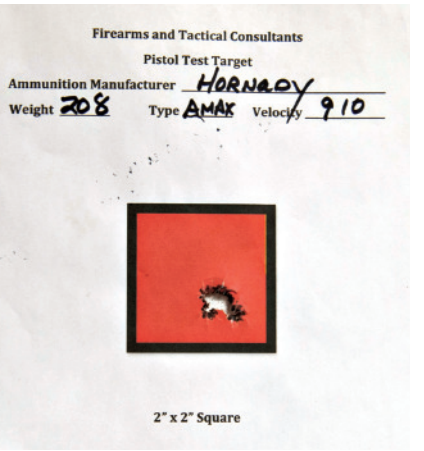
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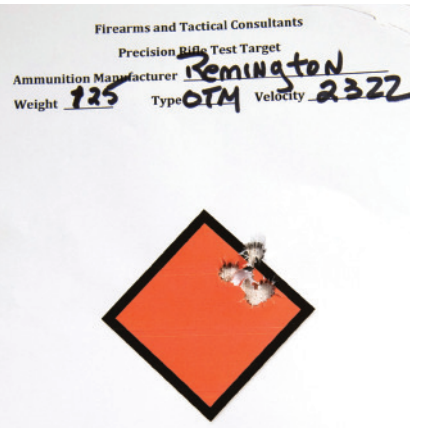
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Testing revealed the 300 BLK to be very accurate with a variety of bullets.



MYSTIC X MULTI-CALIBER SUPPRESSOR

It is quickly looking like 2015 is the year of the suppressor.

Once relegated to military and police operations, they are finally making it into the mainstream. More states are allowing them for hunting, and enthusiasts are finding out just how much fun they are.

Maligned for years as something evil, suppressors are fast becoming a valued addition for everything from pistols to high-powered rifles. Providing recoil control, hearing protection and relief from muzzle blast, they do nothing but enhance the shooting experience.

The only drawback has been cost and a degree of versatility, but even that has changed, and it looks like things are getting even better this year.

Quality suppressors remain costly items, especially when you add the $200 tax stamp paid to the ATF. Manufacturing and material improvements have actually brought quality up and price down, but many customers are only going to be able to afford one suppressor. Making suppressors work over a broad range is a huge advantage and allows retailers to stock fewer of them.

Generally pistol suppressors are not safe on rifles, and rifle suppressors just don't work on pistols – except for 22LR ones.

Not so with the Liberty Suppressor Mystic X, which bridges that pistol-to-rifle gap nicely, allowing use on pistols, subguns and rifles from 5.56mm to 7.62 x 39mm. It's a great alternative for those not wanting to buy a can for each caliber, especially with the increasing popularity of the 300 BLK.

Made of titanium and stainless steel, the Mystic X is rugged and light. Rated for full-auto use in seven calibers and semi-auto use in 53 calibers, it is about as "one size fits all" as you can get.

The monolithic body weighs only 10.5 ounces – add a booster and it's only 13.9 ounces. At 8 inches in length and 1.375 inches in diameter, it fits under most handguards. Several thread adapters and boosters allow its use on different rifles, pistols, and submachine guns. Along with standard fixed threading adapters, most pistol calibers can be fitted to it along with an UZI mount.

Designed to produce upwards of 38 decibels of sound reduction, the Mystic X is plenty quiet.

Our testing on a 9mm Sig Sauer P320C, a Seekins Precision SBR in 300 BLK and a CMMG Mutant MK47 (7.62 x 39mm) showed the Mystic X was quiet and easy to mount and had no adverse effect on reliability or accuracy.

Each mount attached easily to the suppressor and worked as advertised on each weapon. Testing on the Primary Weapons MK116 5.56mm rifle was equally impressive. It was louder for sure, but that is to be expected with a 5.56mm rifle.

Bottom line, during one given day the Mystic X performed flawlessly on everything from a 9mm pistol to a piston-driven 5.56mm rifle. This is likely all most customers would need, and more than most would have. If you are looking for a truly versatile do-it-all kind of suppressor to stock, make sure you take a look at the Liberty Suppressors Mystic X – it might be just about perfect.

SPECS

- Caliber.....30-caliber (9mm, 300 BLK, 7.62 x 39mm, 5.56mm Nato)
- Length.....8.3 inches (including adapter)
- Diameter.....1.375 inches
- Weight.....13.9 ounces (including adapter)
- Thread .....Various, uses adapters
- Material.....Titanium and stainless Steel
- Reduction.....33dB - 38dB (approximate)
- Cost.....$799 (suppressor only); Adapters range from $95 to $155.

best, serving niche markets with low or nonexistent profit margins.

It is looking like the 300 BLK might be the exception to the rule, suffering few of those issues. Barrels are priced the same as many 5.56 equivalents utilizing the same bolt and current AR magazine. Reliability exceeds the 5.56mm in every barrel length, especially pistol lengths. No piston system is required for suppressor use; in fact they work better using DI systems. The 300 BLK is viable for use ranging from self-defense pistols to hunting bolt rifles, and it has the broadest market of any recent offering.

Its only downside to this point is popularity, driving up component costs – but even that is subsiding.

Given proper thought and preparation and some time for costs to come down, the 300 BLK is going to be a real money maker at the retail level – so take the time to understand its strengths and broad appeal. It may just do wonders for the bottom line. **TR**



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USING HOLLYWOOD TO SELL GUNS

By Jorge Amselle

Popular movies and television shows depicting the coolest guns and accessories can really stoke the flames of customer interest. Be sure to have what's hot and give prospective buyers a way to see them in action.

In 1971, the Smith & Wesson Model 29 revolver in .44 Magnum was a hard sell, large and expensive. The company had in fact ceased production of this model due to a lack of sales. But any astute gun shop owner and movie fan at the time would have quickly purchased every Model 29 he could lay his hands on when the film *Dirty Harry* was released.

Clint Eastwood's iconic portrayal of a rogue cop in San Francisco should have given a co-star credit to his 6.5-inch-barreled S&W Model 29, or as he put it in the film, "the most powerful handgun in the world." The use and portrayal of the Model 29 as a crime-stopping hand cannon in this, and the two subsequent *Dirty Harry* films, created an incredible surge in demand. What few Model 29s were available started selling for as much as three times retail.

The firearms industry certainly took notice, and manufacturers eagerly continue the tradition of supplying firearms and gear to TV and film productions. It is essentially free advertising and better than any you could buy. Film and TV buffs notice what type of guns their heroes use and want the same thing, and when they show up in your shop, you want to make sure you have these items in stock. Nothing closes a sale faster than a customer seeing what he likes and immediately being able to touch it.

Of course, it is not always easy to tell what films or shows will become popular or what guns will be featured ahead of time. It is, however, unquestionable that movies and TV shows drive sales and, more recently, what people see as the latest and coolest tactical gear.

Films like *Zero Dark Thirty* and *American Sniper* feature specialized weapons used by American special operations forces that are not generally available to the public, but civilian versions of these guns and suppressors can stock your store shelves.

USING HOLLYWOOD TO SELL GUNS



Luis Rose of Sterling Arsenal outside Washington, D.C., uses popular TV shows and movies to upsell accessories and services.

The popular television series *The Walking Dead* started out with survivors using rather pedestrian firearms, with the exception of Rick's 6-inch stainless steel .357 Magnum Colt Python. In the most recent season, the band of zombie hunters has upped their game and is armed with increasingly sophisticated weaponry, including AKs, SBRs, sniper ARs and H&Ks.

I spoke with Luis Rose of Sterling Arsenal, a tactical retail shop located in Northern Virginia in the Washington, D.C., area — which many outside the Beltway feel is ground zero for brainless zombie hoards — about how films and TV shows affect and drive his sales. He reminded me that it is not just fiction that drives sales but reality shows as well, like the popular marksmanship competition series *Top Shot* on the History Channel.

"Most of the shows on the Outdoor Channel do a great job of showcasing and promoting new products," Rose said. "They provide good information and help to stimulate interest, but at times they seem more like infomercials.

"In contrast, shows like *The Walking Dead* incorporate interesting plots which insert the practical and situational application of firearms and other weapons and tools in often positive ways, connecting the viewer to that situation," Rose added. "Customers at our shop often mention *Walking Dead* as well as films like *Lone Survivor* and *Shooter*."

Sterling Arsenal also encourages its staff to mention TV and movie guns to help drive interest and sales.

"I will say to a customer: 'Here's an early 1970s Smith & Wesson model 29-2, just like the one Clint Eastwood used in *Dirty Harry*,' or maybe 'Here's a Beretta M9 with threaded barrel and a silencer set up just like the one Carl has on *Walking Dead*,' " Rose explained.

"If a new firearm has been introduced on a popular show, I make sure we have a few of them at the shop," Rose added.

Rose also uses movies and television shows to up-sell hot accessories and other services like red dots and customization.





AMC's The Walking Dead has featured a variety of firearms and accessory products that get customers talking. It certainly wouldn't hurt to keep a few of those guns on your shelf.

"[I] will ask a customer: 'Would you like a Trijicon ACOG and get your rifle Cerakoted, configured like on Lone Survivor?' " Rose said.

The shop also features a large screen TV where clips from popular films and TV shows are displayed featuring guns in the store. Tactical training DVDs, which are sold in the shop, can also help drive sales.

Of course, if weapons are being improperly handled or some director decides to play fast and loose with the actual capabilities of a firearm (think endless capacity magazines, revolvers that blow the doors off cars and shotguns that send bad guys flying through the air), this creates a false impression for the viewer, which gun shops sometimes have to address.

I spoke with several industry leaders who routinely work with Hollywood producers to find out what are the best gun movies out there.

"I was impressed with the all-around authenticity/feel of *American Sniper*, and they seemed to get the gear right. From a weapons and gear standpoint, I think *Zero Dark Thirty* really nailed it as well, same with *Lone Survivor*," said SilencerCo's Josh Waldron. "For tactical movement, it's hard to beat the alley scene from *Collateral* with Tom Cruise. Say what you will about him, but that scene was spot on."

John Hollister, Sig Sauer's suppressor product manager, has worked extensively with TV and film producers and has his favorites as well.

"As a gun guy, for me one of the best gun movies is *Way of the Gun*. The gun handling is probably the best I have seen," he says. "The best single gun scene for me would be the running gun battle in Heat. I'm also a big fan of Michael Mann's direction in action movies. He generally goes out of his way to be technically correct."

It certainly does the retail gun shop little good if the products featured on movies and TV that its customers want are not available. Manufacturers are aware of this and work hard to keep tactical retailers well supplied.

According to Waldron, "The incredible growth and demand for silencers has put us in a position of constant production. So we're more or less running on all cylinders to meet orders from distributors."

USING HOLLYWOOD TO SELL GUNS



The reality/competition show Top Shot has brought attention to some lesser-known guns and also showcased some classics.

A&E NETWORK



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SUPPRESSORS

Firearms are far from the only gun product featured in TV and films, and accessories that make guns more effective and practical (and let's face it, cooler as well) often play a supporting role. The suppressor market is increasing as awareness of legal ownership in the vast majority of states becomes more well-known, and thanks to their use in films like *Zero Dark Thirty* and TV shows like *The Walking Dead*.

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According to Rose, Sterling Arsenal has witnessed a notable surge in interest.

"2014 was all about silencers. *The Walking Dead* did an excellent job incorporating silencers into the plot of the show over the past couple seasons," Rose says. "Customers have come into the shop this past season and recognized the H&K MK23 and SilencerCo Osprey. I hear a lot of folks say, 'hey, there's Rick's gun, can I get that?' and of course we say yes."

Joshua Waldron at SilencerCo is also excited about the state of the industry.

"We've gotten some pretty good airtime this season on AMC's *The Walking Dead*. We've also been featured in NBC's *State of Affairs*, and also some video games currently in development that will hopefully have SilencerCo products in prominent roles," Waldron says.

His company has also used this in its marketing on social media and elsewhere.

"When you see the Osprey on the end of Rick's gun in *Walking Dead*, you know exactly what it is, and who made it," Waldron says. "I'd say anytime someone sees our product on TV or in a movie it





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USING HOLLYWOOD TO SELL GUNS


AMC NETWORK

legitimizes both our company and the need for suppressed firearms."

John Hollister at Sig Sauer provided other positive images of suppressors in film and TV, and he works closely with the industry to ensure a positive and accurate portrayal.

"I work with several of the prop houses that provide equipment for different movies to supply their needs, be it equipment or technical assistance," Hollister said. "I have also worked with writers to get technical aspects of the equipment right."


AMC NETWORK

At the end of the day, a TV show or film is still a work of fiction or an artistic rendition of a real event.

"There are things done in movies to advance the story or help the audience relate to a plot point that might be less than technically correct," said Hollister. "For the silencer side, there has long been a perception that if someone has a silencer, they must be a bad guy or up to no good. Today, with military and law enforcement using more and more silencers and educational efforts on the consumer side, we see more good guys in movies using silencers."

LASERS

Being a visual medium, films often take advantage of laser sights. One memorable use of lasers was in the film Predator, although that was not on a gun and I have yet to convince a manufacturer to develop a shoulder-mounted triple-beam laser.

Probably the most iconic weapon-mounted laser in film history was Arnold Schwarzenegger's top-mounted red laser on an AMT long slide stainless steel 1911 in *The Terminator*. I know it made me want to buy one.

Lasers, of course, have serious practical applications that extend far beyond Hollywood visual effects. For a gun shop, having a low-light area that features lasers can help close a sale, and if you really want to impress, try combining an infrared laser with night-vision scopes or goggles. This is what Luis Rose has done at Sterling Arsenal, where he allows customers to try both out.

Mike Faw at Crimson Trace declined to discuss the multiple TV and film projects in development with their products, but he did drop some hints.

"We have two blockbuster movies coming out this summer that will prominently show our products. Of course lasers were featured prominently in films like *Zero Dark Thirty*," Faw said. "As people see laser sights in use in more and more films, they will be seen as less futuristic and more mainstream and available."

To really impress customers, try using green lasers as well, which are far more visible to the human eye and work a lot better in daylight conditions. The beam is often strong enough to see, especially if you haven't dusted the shop in a while. Green lasers are being featured in more films and TV shows as well.

Andy Scott, Director of Sales at Viridian Green Laser Sights, explained how his company maximizes its exposure when its products appear in TV or movies.

"We have been featured on CBS's Numbers and other shows. When this happens, we get the info to our reps and top customers and also promote on it our website and other marketing efforts," Scott says. "The great thing is that our products are so visible that producers often go above and beyond to make it look really neat."

Channing Tatum and Jamie Foxx used Viridian Green Lasers in the 2013 film *White House Down* to fight off terrorist and regain control of the White House. Tatum specifically used the powerful Viridian X5L.

The company issued a press release to capitalize on the film. Viridian President Brian Hedeen said at the time, "Our products have appeared in primetime network dramas, cable programs, and the popular video game Modern Warfare 2, but this is especially exciting exposure for us." **TR**

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SMALLER, LIGHTER, MORE.



PUNCH

By Sean Utley

Tactical continues its trend into the practical with this year's offerings in defensive handguns, marked by concealable frames in bigger calibers. Manufacturers are giving shooters the gun they love in a size they can carry.



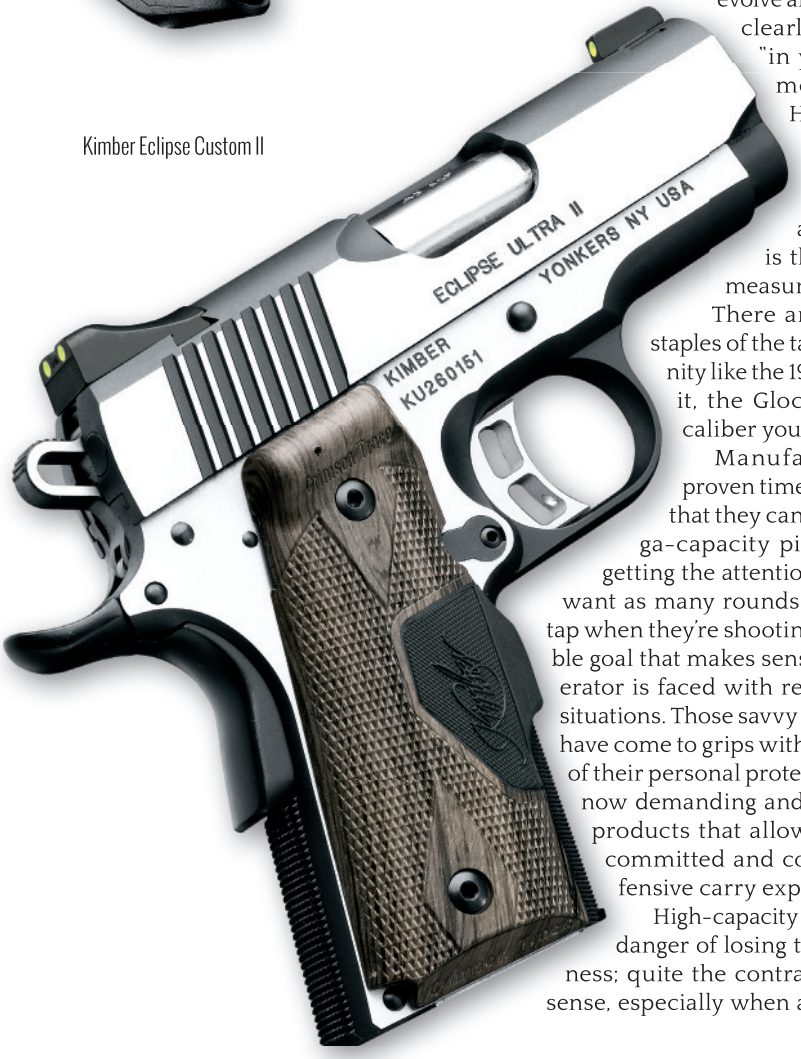
DEFENSIVE HANDGUNS



Kimber Desert Warrier TFS

The shooting community has enjoyed some great times as of late, and many new products continue to hit the market. And as 2015 hits its stride, newer and better products are hitting the tactical community.

As the black gun world continues to evolve and morph, it has clearly become less "in your face" and more subdued. How are manufacturers responding to shooters' wants and needs, and is there an overall measurable trend?



Kimber Eclipse Custom II

There are the obvious staples of the tactical community like the 1911 and, let's face it, the Glock in whatever caliber you can think of.

Manufacturers have proven time and time again that they can churn out mega-capacity pistols aimed at getting the attention of those who want as many rounds as possible on tap when they're shooting — an admirable goal that makes sense until the operator is faced with real-world carry situations. Those savvy customers who have come to grips with the challenges of their personal protection needs are now demanding and responding to products that allow them a more committed and comfortable defensive carry experience.

High-capacity pistols are in no danger of losing their attractiveness; quite the contrary. They make sense, especially when an individual is training frequently and for extended periods of time. Larger pistols are generally easier and more comfortable to shoot, and a higher capacity means longer periods of enjoyment when training. It only makes sense that customers would be attracted to this.

But there seems to be some movement toward a scaled-down, slimmer-profile handgun as well.

Although slim is in, not all manufacturers are putting their eggs into one basket. Smaller versions of larger double-stack guns continue to make their way to market and remain popular with shooters as well. Additionally, the 1911 platform may be long in the tooth, but it is also long in its appeal and adaptability. While 9mms and .380s are hot — especially with ever-improving defensive ammo performance — the .45 refuses to go away quietly and is making its way into newer, smaller handguns.

This year features several new offerings in defensive handguns, and manufacturers will be jockeying for position in display cases across the nation.

KIMBER

Kimber dropped several new 1911 models this year. First up is its stainless Micro Raptor, a 1911 chambered in .380. The Stainless Micro Raptor is 5.6 inches long and weighs 13.4 ounces, keeping things small and light. It's just over an inch wide, and though it is small and very concealable, it sports three-dot Tritium night sights. Sights seem to suffer as guns get smaller, but Kimber keeps it real with the Micro Raptor. It even comes with

attractive Zebra wood grips, a feature you might only expect in a much larger version of the 1911.

The Ultra RCPII (LG) is meant for deep concealment while maintaining big-bore superiority. There are several attractive features on the Ultra RCP II, like an ambidextrous thumb safety, Crimson Trace Lasergrips, a trough sight, KimPro II corrosion-resistant finish and a snare-free exterior dubbed "Extreme Melt Treatment."

The Eclipse (LG) line includes 1911s of varying sizes — all with steel frames and Crimson Trace Lasergrips. The Eclipse Ultra II, Eclipse Pro II and Ultra II are full-, commander- and officer-size .45s. They are optioned identically with slate-wood double diamond Crimson Trace Lasergrips, match-grade triggers and barrels, and three-dot green tritium night sights. One just needs to decide which size fits their needs — or better yet, buy them all.

The Desert Warrior TFS is a full-size, no-nonsense, tactically focused 1911. The TFS stands for "threaded for suppression," a leap that Kimber made in 2014 in response to the huge increase in suppressor usage. TFS guns are offered only from the factory, and barrels will not be sold separately.

The Desert Warrior is built tough with a steel frame and slide and comes with a match-grade, stainless steel barrel, which is the norm for Kimber. It also comes with appropriately raised suppressor sights. Dressed in a luscious Dark Darth Kim Pro II coating, it is beyond appealing to the eye. Nearly identical to the Desert Warrior, the Warrior SOC (TFS) adds a two tone Dark Earth and black finish, different grips and a rail-mounted Crimson Trace laser.

GLOCK

Glock hits the scene with the hard-hitting G40 Gen4 MOS, or "Modular Optic System." MOS models have an adapter plate kit and four adapter plates included so shooters can attach the popular red dot of their choice. Tools to attach and remove the plates and optics are included as well. Chambered in 10mm, this long-slide behemoth is intended for fat-round enthusiasts and hunters. With tactically minded shooters looking to long-slide handguns, and the rekindled love affair with red dots atop pistols, the new Glock offers a combination of wins.



Kimber Warrior SOC

The G40 Gen 4 MOS configuration has a barrel length of 6.02 inches and an overall length of 9.49 inches. The MOS configuration is available in other calibers as well. The G34, 35 and 41 in MOS configurations sport 5.31-inch barrels chambered in 9mm, .40 S&W and .45 ACP respectively.

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

The Springfield XD is an example of a very successful line of polymer-framed pistols. The lineage continues to diversify with the XD Mod .2 subcompact, with what Springfield has labeled Gripzone texture technology.

Gripzone incorporates different textures designed into the frame, meant to provide the shooter with as much grip as possible on the firearm. There are three of these zones, and each zone employs a specially designed feel where the shooter's hand makes contact with the frame. Springfield also reduced the frame's circumference, which should further aid in a good grip. Though this might sound gimmicky, Springfield Armory has put a lot of research and effort into this design to greatly enhance the shooting experience.

The Mod .2 includes enhancements to other parts of the gun such as the sights and rear serrations, as well as a slimmer slide. Technical data is deep on the Mod .2 guns and offers a deeper interaction and conversation with potential buyers.

The XD Mod .2 subcompact is offered in a 3-inch-barreled 9mm and .40 S&W and a 3.3-inch .45 ACP.

Springfield's popular Range Officer gets an extension of sorts

DEFENSIVE HANDGUNS



Springfield RO Champion

with the new Champion edition. Meant for easier concealment, the RO Champion has been fine-tuned to make it smaller and easier to shoot while reducing felt recoil. Inside is a dual spring with full-length guide rod, and it's topped with a fiber-optic front sight and a low-profile combat rear sight. The frame is lightweight alloy and accommodates a seven-round magazine of .45 ACP; the 9mm holds nine rounds.

On the full-size 1911 front, Springfield is offering the 1911 Marine Corps Operator. Few guns can carry the label of defensive handgun like the 1911, and Springfield ups the game by bringing a model built to Marine Corps spec — and making it available and affordable for lovers of the 1911. Features include Picattiny rail to mount various accessories, ambidextrous safety and a larger beavertail grip — features typically reserved for custom 1911s. And Springfield added a new grip texture to the front strap.

Springfield is offering "more" in the 1911 with the 1911 Loaded .45 ACP. It's another full-size 1911 with all the fixins' at a reasonable price: extended ambi thumb safety, beavertail grip safety, lightweight delta hammer and extended trigger.



Springfield XD Mod .2

SIG SAUER

Sig's P320 subcompact is aimed at maximum concealment and firepower. Sig's striker-fired approach utilizes a serialized stainless steel frame that is interchanged between grip modules, slides, fire control groups and barrels. The P320 subcompact 9mm comes with a 12-round magazine and will also accept 15- and 17-round magazines.



Springfield 1911 Marine Corps Operator



Sig P320

Not to be outdone, the .45 ACP gets some love in the P320 Compact. It's the same modular fire control group as the P320 line, and with the various grip module sizes, owners can set up their guns to feel the way they want them to — only with bigger bullets.

Sig is also going big-bore with the P220 in 10mm. It's a single-stack version with a 5-inch barrel. Apparently Sig has had many requests for a 10mm version of the P220. Though there are four versions, two are focused on the defensive side. The Match Elite Reverse Two-Tone P220 is a DA/SA model with the Elite Beavertail, and it also features front cocking serrations.

The Stainless Elite and Stainless Elite Nitro P220 are single-action-only versions with SIGLITE night sights and front cocking serrations. Two different sets of grips are available with Rosewood versions appearing on the Stainless Elite and black G-10 Piranha grips on the Stainless Elite Nitro.

RUGER

In 2011, Ruger started producing 1911s. Four years later, Ruger is releasing its SR1911 Lightweight Commander-Style pistol. This lighter-weight offering is targeted squarely at the concealed carry crowd.

The use of new materials results in an aluminum frame that is 7 ounces lighter than the stainless steel gun. The SR1911 Lightweight incorporates a integrated polished titanium feed ramp to improve long-term reliability. Other features include Novak LoMount Carry three-dot sights, a lowered, flared ejection port and even a titanium firing pin.

Ruger also says that each SR1911 gets a precision barrel and bushing. Further improving consistency, these parts are machined from the same piece of bar stock. Other features include those that you would find on custom 1911s, which seems to be the trend: beavertail grip safety, extended thumb safety and a skeletonized trigger and safety.



Sig P220 Stainless Elite

DEFENSIVE HANDGUNS



The LCP was a smash hit for Ruger and gets several updates for 2015. The company added a wider, skeletonized trigger and new sights, including a dovetailed rear and a front sight with a photo luminescent dot. These features should surely improve the usability of the LCP. Ruger has even added a stainless steel guide rod. Coupled with today's modern .380 ammunition, the LCP should continue to be a good ultra-compact choice.

SALIENT

Though many new handguns are basically upgraded and enhanced versions of existing technology from manufacturers, Salient is releasing its own complete handgun in 2015.

Salient offers top tier products for the discerning customer, and the innovation extends beyond the product itself and into the name: The Salient Blu.

The Blu is available in full-size and compact frames and takes Glock magazines. The Blu dons a match-fit fluted barrel, beautiful front and rear serrations that extend over the top of the frame,



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and a brass counterweight fit into the backstrap. It comes with either flat or curved triggers as well as a fiber-optic front sight and countless other features, including a cutaway in the top of the slide. I've not seen anything like the Blu, and I suspect it will be very popular.

2015 brings in several new choices for defensive handguns, though nothing earth-shattering landed this year. The common threads seem to be an emphasis on getting more gun in a smaller, lighter, easier-to-carry package and shoving more custom options into the 1911.

Though polymer-framed pistols continue to be very popular, the revered 1911 shows no signs of slowing down in its enhancements. Of course these aren't the only new defensive handguns for 2015, but it's a decent sampling of what's out there.

Looks like 2015 might be the year of the 1911. **TR**


The Salient Blu features a unique cutaway in the top of the slide.



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Advanced Armament Corp.
SILENCERS MADE IN THE U.S.A.

ADVANCED ARMAMENT CORPORATION:
RETOOLING FOR THE BIG GAME

By Brian McCombie



Sometimes down but never out, Remington is throwing all its resources and talent behind one of the tactical world's most iconic brands.

Photos courtesy of Jonathan Owen, SHWAT.com

ADVANCED ARMAMENT CORP



"The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated." – **Mark Twain**

This famous quote by American novelist and humorist Mark Twain has been tweaked and altered over the decades, but the essential point remains the same: once the rumor mills get rolling, expect great exaggerations. Up to and including death.

And so it is with one of the shooting industry's newest icons, Advanced Armament Corporation, or AAC — long considered the country's top manufacturer of suppressors. As part of the corporate relocation that has AAC and other subsidiaries of the Remington Outdoor Company moving to new manufacturing and research digs in Huntsville, Alabama, AAC is most definitely going through some changes.

Apparently, all the activity at AAC got some people thinking — and maybe even overthinking. Massive layoffs and firings was the first rumor, with AAC getting folded under the banner of another Remington entity as the follow-up. And, of course, ala Twain, as the rumors gained force there were many reports of AAC's imminent death.

However, based on what *Tactical Retailer* has discovered and the people we have heard from, Mr. Twain's observation about sums up the reality. AAC isn't going under.

As to the changes afoot, they are significant — no doubt about that. But they are changes, AAC management insists, meant to propel the company and its product line forward.

THE RUMORS BEGIN

The big news about AAC that got industry attention — and began to fuel industry and Internet speculation — was the December 2014 announcement by John Hollister that he was leaving AAC to join Sig Sauer as its new product manager. All by itself, his exit to Sig led to a cascade of the "AAC's on the verge of folding" rumors.

Hollister was AAC's national sales manager, and for years he was very much the face of the company. Open an AAC catalogue, click on a YouTube video featuring AAC products, go to a trade show and visit the AAC booth — there was John Hollister, demonstrating AAC products and educating folks on suppressors. If you were in the shooting sports media and had any sort of AAC-related question, it was a no-brainer: call up Hollister.

In reading the many Internet-posted speculations that sprang up after Hollister joined Sig, one is struck by the reality that no one apparently asked him why he made the move. Was he afraid AAC was going to collapse? Did SIG make him a mega-bucks offer he couldn't turn down? Was he simply ready for one of those big life changes?

When *Tactical Retailer* initially contacted Hollister, he said he would tell us

EDUCATING CUSTOMERS – AND RETAILERS

Since he took over as product line manager for AAC, Carlos Martinez has manned the AAC booth at a number of trade shows. And at every show he's attended, dozens of people come up to the booth with the same question: "Are those suppressor things actually legal for people to own? I thought only police could use them."

"People can't believe it when I tell them, yes, they are legal in your state," Martinez says. "So I think a big part of our market growth is going to have to start with educating the public."

To do this, AAC created "Can U," an interactive website designed to educate the general public about current silencer laws and regulations. Complete with an "undergraduate" section for civilians and a "graduate" section for dealers, Can U provides lessons on everything from suppressor benefits and functionality to the history of suppressors – *www.aaccanu.com.*

Notice, too, that Can U has a dealer focus. Why? As Martinez notes, a lot of FFL retailers think the process to become a Class III Dealer (and to then be able to sell suppressors and other Class III items) is extremely hard, technical and expensive. It isn't, Martinez insists, as Can U reveals.

"I don't think a lot of retailers realize the profits they can make with suppressors, either," Martinez adds. "With firearms, you're looking at a profit margin in that 10 to 15 percent range. But the profits on suppressors are up to 30 percent, and in some cases, a bit more."

To get the word out to all – customers and dealers – AAC is boosting its social media presence, too, with a more vigorous approach to Facebook and Twitter. AAC is also creating a series of short videos that debunk various suppressor myths, and will be launching them via Facebook and Twitter – as well as on Can U.



Top to bottom: Spacer you can add or take out of new Ti-RantM, new Ti-Rant M, original Ti-Rant.

"the rest of the story," as he called it, after he cleared it with Sig's PR department. He added that, "As to my feelings about AAC ... I still love the company, love the products we made and love the customers."

While his promised "rest of the story" was never presented to us, despite numerous requests, in his contacts with *TR*, it should be noted that Hollister never said or suggested a negative thing about AAC.

SHUTTING DOWN

It's true that in 2015, AAC stopped production — for a short time.

Mike Smith, AAC's top engineer, explains in a blog that AAC's facility in Lawrenceville, Georgia, ceased production in February 2015.

"The relocation of equipment and personnel will take place between the cessation of production and early May," Smith wrote.

Will AAC lose employees in that move? No doubt. And just as likely, it will be



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hiring new people in Alabama as production ramps up in Huntsville.

But location aside, will it be the same AAC that people have come to know over the years? Not if the folks in charge at AAC have anything to say about it.

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

"We have been a leading player in the suppressor and tactical market for years," says Carlos Martinez, the new product line manager for AAC. "But we've certainly lost some ground over the last few years. No question about that. Now our job is to regain the momentum, take back that market share plus. And I think we are putting together the plan to do just that."

Martinez became AAC product manager in 2014, after several different stints at Remington, including product manager for the company's re-entry into the handgun market a few years ago when it launched its line of semi-automatic 1911 pistols, the R-1. In that case, Martinez noted, he and his staff put together a five-year plan for the R-1 line, and he's aiming to do the same thing with AAC.

"AAC had an edgy marketing approach when [Remington] acquired it," Martinez says. "I think we lost that somewhat. Frankly, our R&D had slipped a bit. And I don't think we've communicated very well to our customer base, either, through venues like social media.

"Over that same time period," Martinez continues, "AAC went from one of four or so suppressor makers in the country to one of 15 — or more. It seems like there's a new suppressor manufacturer out there every month or two. Did we do a good job of separating ourselves from the pack? We did not. But we are going to do a much, much better job of it from here on."

LEAVING THE GUNS BEHIND

AAC was the driving force behind the development of the immensely popular 300 Blackout round. In fact, technically the name of the round is the "300 AAC Blackout."

Once AAC had the round in development, it realized it was going to need to offer rifles for the new chambering. So ACC also developed and introduced the bolt-action Model 7, the single-shot break-action HandiRifle, and the semi-automatic MPW, all three in 300 AAC BLK.

But take a look at the 2015 AAC catalogue and all these rifles are missing. What gives?

"We made the decision that we are getting out of the rifle-making business," says Jeff Still, Director of Accessories and Suppressors at Remington Outdoor Company. "We are going to focus all of our efforts on suppressors and related accessories."

With one exception: AAC continues to offer 300 AAC BLK upper receivers, in three barrel lengths: 9-inch, 12.5-inch and 16-inch.

Still also notes another big change at AAC, promising to reverse an all-too-common trend in the industry.

"It's very frustrating for customers to have new products being talked about in the outdoors and shooting sports media, and then not be available at their retailers," says Still. "When we officially launch a product, it will be 100 percent ready at a production level.

"Which means, when we launch it, it will be available to customers," Still adds. "No six to 12, or even more, months of waiting. Now."

WHAT'S NEW

So, in 2015 AAC has introduced six new products.

- *The **SR-5**, a fast-attach suppressor for 5.56 NATO platform rifles.*
- *The **SR-7**, also a fast-attach suppressor, but for 7.62 NATO rifles.*
- *The **Illusion 9**, a suppressor for 9mm semi-automatic pistols that sits low enough, there's no need to replace existing factory sights with models that sit up higher (a common complaint of 9mm suppressors).*
- *The **Ti-Rant 45M**, a modular version of AAC's popular Ti-Rant that can be downsized up to 2 inches, without tools. Optimized for .45 ACP pistols, but compatible with .40 S&W and 9mm pistols, too.*
- *The **Aviator 2**, a rimfire suppressor for .22LR handguns and rifles.*
- *The **Mercury**, an all-stainless rimfire suppressor made for .22Mag, .17HMR, and .17MachII rifles and pistols.*

And there's more to come,



Top: SR-5
Bottom: SR-7

Martinez promises.

"We're definitely putting the R&D muscle of the Remington Outdoor Company behind our new AAC products, and we think shooters, hunters and retailers are going to see that in a steady stream of new and better products," he said. **TR**

HUNTING FOR NEW CUSTOMERS

For 2015 and beyond, AAC will be focusing more efforts on tapping into the growing market of hunters who use or would like to use suppressors. And it may get some help from Big Green.

"We need to have a face at AAC for the hunters," says Carlos Martinez, product manager for AAC. "That's a huge market, and one we really haven't worked on developing because so much of our focus has been tactical. But that's going to change."

AAC's always been associated with the tactical side, and for good reasons, including the fact that many military and law enforcement special operations units use and swear by AAC suppressors. But, Martinez notes, suppressors are legal for hunting in at least 33 states, with lawmakers in more states currently considering regulation changes that would allow hunters to go afield suppressed.

Martinez plans to approach this market with traditional media coverage of AAC suppressors – magazines, hunting websites and television – as well as a strong social media campaign that shows everyday hunters using suppressed firearms.

Part of any campaign to capture more of the hunting market, Martinez adds, will have to incorporate some "Suppressor 101" education. Unfortunately, survey after survey has shown that a majority of people – and even the majority of gun owners and hunters – don't know that suppressors are in fact legal to own and use in the majority of states.

Martinez is also pondering working with other Remington Outdoor Company entities, including Remington and DPMS, to tailor some rifles for suppressors.

"I think it would be a big help if we could work with our sister companies to do things like thread the muzzles on certain hunting rifle lines (or) at least offer it as an option," he explains. "That way you remove a big hurdle – the hunter has a suppressor-ready rifle, so he or she doesn't have to pay another $125 to the local gunsmith to get it threaded."



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IWI

THE BEST UPGRADE TO A TAVOR

By David Bahde

The Israeli Tavor is one of the most popular rifles in America, and rightfully so. But a trigger designed for rough use by conscript troops has been one of the bullpup's major shortcomings ... until now.

If you are looking for something different in a carbine, the bullpup market is a great place. Much of the world (outside America) is moving to this design in their military rifles. If they are not using an AR or AK platform, it's usually some sort of bullpup.

The compact design of a bullpup makes long-term carry easier, helps with deployment from vehicles and is quick for use in CQB operations. Utilizing a longer barrel eliminates many of the reliability issues with shorter designs while maintaining a compact platform. Piston systems provide smooth and cooler operation. Those willing to look outside the AR or AK box can find a lot to like, and one of the best out there is the IWI Tavor.

IWI TAVOR

The Israeli Weapons Industries Tavor has done very well. No other bullpup has experienced the same level of popularity. Others have had a niche group of followers, but the Tavor has gained widespread use in the civilian market. Much of its success is due to the use of features many American buyers want.

Employing standard M16 magazines taps into the huge inventory of existing supply. And a bolt-hold-open mechanism on the last round is also a big plus for most American buyers. The Tavor's safety operates the same as an AR, it has a nonreciprocating charging handle, and an oversized bolt release allows for rapid magazine changes.

Because the Tavor is the civilian version of an Israeli battle rifle, the trigger is designed for hard operational use. The rugged reliability of the Tavor has endeared itself to many, and it continues to grow in popularity. While it certainly does not have the ability to be "accessorized" like an AR, it's getting better each year.

BEST TAVOR UPGRADE



TRIGGERS ARE WHERE IT'S AT!

Any dealer knows margins on most guns are minimal. Accessories are the ticket, and one of the most often purchased is the trigger. It was true with my M1A decades ago, and my first AR-15 rifle.

Military rifle triggers designed for combat are typically heavy, gritty and stiff. Most consumers look to replace these, and the Tavor is no exception. Built for troops in a desert, the trigger is reliable, but feels like a Mil-Spec M16 trigger. Fast repeat shots are tough. Clean, crisp triggers facilitate accuracy, control and fast repeat shots.

So far three companies have come through with aftermarket triggers for the Tavor. Each is a bit different, with strengths and weaknesses catering to different shooters.

SWAPPING TRIGGERS IN THE TAVOR

First off, IWI designed the Tavor to be user-friendly and easy to maintain. Swapping trigger packs on the Tavor is a no-tools operation taking less than a minute. Make sure the gun is unloaded with no magazine. Rack the charging handle to reset the hammer and put it on "safe." Push out two captured pins and it drops into your hand. Insert the new trigger pack, push in the pins, perform a function check and you are done — it's that simple.

Over the last year, three companies with proven histories have made triggers for the Tavor. All have been around long enough to be thoroughly tested.

Timney is long known for its triggers, along with Geissele. Shooting Sight is a bit less well known, as it has remained focused on the M1A market. Building some of the best trigger parts for the M1A, it has served the service rifle match leaders for years and has a very strong following. All were tested extensively, over thousands of rounds, a couple of years and in most any configuration possible with the Tavor.

TIMNEY

Timney was the first to provide a replacement trigger pack for this rifle. Early versions experienced issues in a few rifles, mostly light primer strikes. My first trigger pack had this issue, as did a few others among friends.

Timney offers a crisp, single-stage trigger similar to an AR-style trigger.





Shooting Sight's TAV-D is a two-stage trigger meant to mimic an M1A match trigger.

Timney started working on it from the first complaint. Given the total number sold, the instances were rare by comparison, but they did occur. After about 200 rounds, some of my Mil-Spec ammo had light primer strikes. After a few months testing other triggers, Timney's latest version hit the streets.

Comparing the two, the hammer was a bit different, with more mass. But whatever the company did, it worked. During testing over the course of about 1,000 rounds of the very same ammunition, it did not miss a beat. It was flawless with every load and worked well while suppressed. Timney's trigger is built in a nice aluminum housing with a wired EDM cut, heat-treated, Teflon-coated hammer, offering many years of use.

Anyone that prefers the feel of a crisp and clean single-stage trigger similar to an AR will like the Timney. Overall take-up is minimal with a crisp and predictable break that measured right at 4 pounds. As a two-stage kind of guy, it took me a few rounds to get used to, but it is very nice. To those used to aftermarket AR triggers, this is the ticket.

I handed it off to a couple of friends preferring single-stage designs; they all liked it the best. The only difference is a bit of take-up, and that is due to the factory Tavor trigger bow.

SHOOTING SIGHT

Shooting Sight offers its TAV-D trigger in either a Delrin or aluminum housing. Mine was an early model using the Delrin body, but the internals are identical.

Parts are machined from heat-treated plate tool steel. An ultra-hard, low-friction surface coating ensures reliable operation in dirty environments. Built to mimic an M1A match trigger, it is a two-stage design.

The first stage is 3 pounds, with a 2-pound second stage netting a 5-pound total trigger weight. It was tested thoroughly and spent many months in my rifle. It was also used in a colleague's rifle during a Crimson Trace 3-gun match to his great delight.

During a Haley Strategic Carbine class where fast trigger times were critical, it performed well. Not as fast as my competition two-stage AR triggers, but close. My split times rivaled many of the AR rifles, and it was accurate at ranges out to 500 yards. It has been flawless from beginning to end with all ammunition, both suppressed and unsuppressed.



THE SUREFIRE SCOUT LIGHT

Having a light on your deployment or home-defense carbine is a must. Identifying a threat or target is imperative, and the fight often occurs in low and failing light conditions.

Your light must be bright enough to see clearly yet remain lightweight and compact. Battery life is critical, as well as the types used. The best light on the planet is worthless if you can't find batteries. SureFire has been the industry standard for decades, and it continues to improve its products yearly. Having used several over the years, I can attest that they remain the most dependable, rugged and proven weapons lights you can buy.

SureFire's Scout Light is my favorite weapons-mounted long gun light. Small, light, compact and easy to mount, it can be very powerful. Swap out a different head and you can even get IR light. Most take Lithium 123 batteries common in many sights, and are pretty easy to get if you're in America.

Those deploying overseas often complain about how hard they are to get and how prolific the AA battery is. So SureFire has answered the call with its new Scout Light using AA batteries.

Built to SureFire's usual standards, this light can take abuse. Roughly an inch longer than the other Scout Light design, it uses the same mounts. Rated at a maximum 200 lumens output, battery life is more than twice that of more powerful lights at 3.75 hours.

Using the latest RM45 mount, the AA scout was mounted to my Tavor using an integrated tape switch. The mount is slim with no protrusions and did not block my sight line. Placed at 45 degrees, the light is in just about the perfect position. It can be switched around for use on side rails as well, and it provides a simple and rugged lighting system with plenty of power for most any duty or self-defense application.

BEST TAVOR UPGRADE

Geissele's Super Sabra Tavor is a two-stage trigger with an adjustable first stage.



The Shooting Sights TAV-D is well suited to anyone who prefers a two-stage trigger, especially if you like an M1A feel. The 5-pound trigger weight is perfect for duty rifles, providing excellent accuracy with rapid fire much easier than the factory trigger. Given the built-in take-up of the factory trigger bow, it took some getting used to, but it was fast and predictable.

The TAV-D trigger saw the most use given the time it was in the rifle. There were no light primer strikes, failures to reset or any other issues.

GEISSELE

Geissele Automatics has earned a strong following among those using AR rifles for duty or competition. All my personal ARs use SSA two-stage triggers.

The last to hit the market in force, the Super Sabra Tavor trigger has become a favorite for many shooters. Built in a 6060-T 6 housing, it is designed around Geissele's proven Super Semi-Automatic AR trigger. Internals are all S7 tool steel and nitride coated for wear and corrosion resistance. Unlike the others, the first stage is adjustable for pull weight. The second stage is fixed at 2 pounds, which ends up with a trigger in the 5.5- to 7.5-pound range. Given an adjustable first-stage, take-up is less than the Shooting Sight, with the same crisp 2-pound second stage. This trigger allowed me to set it up to very closely mimic my AR triggers. Tested over the last few months, it has proven very precise and fast.

Having the ability to adjust that first stage gives you some control over the added take-up. If you run a Geissele in your AR, this will likely be your preference as well. Some police agencies don't allow adjustable triggers, so that might be an issue, but it is acceptable for just about any use in my mind.

GEISSELE TRIGGER BOW

Introduced at SHOT show, the Geissele Trigger Bow offers an improvement over the factory unit and enhances the operation of each of these triggers. The aftermarket triggers on the Tavor all suffer from pre-travel — you must take up some spring tension before the trigger pack actually kicks in.

Geissele's new Lightning Trigger Bow allows adjustment and simplifies and strengthens the mechanism, providing a flatter trigger face that encourages better accuracy.


Geissele's Lightning Bolt Trigger Bow

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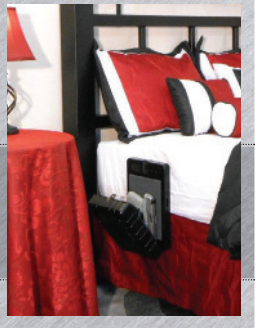
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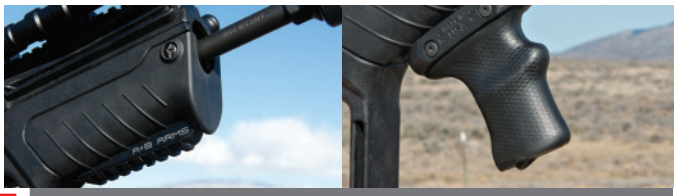

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AMERICAN BUILT ARMS TAVOR RAILS & GRIPS

IWI's Tavor has remained my go-to carbine for duty-related application or training. It has seen thousands of rounds and several classes, and has been a dependable workhorse.

As the Tavor has grown in popularity, the accessory market has grown with it. Triggers are now available, along with rail systems, hand guards, safeties and several other parts, enhancing the shooting experience or better facilitating duty or home defense use. Several companies specialize in Tavor accessories, but one of the first to build quality items is American Built Arms.

The company is veteran-owned and uses parts made in America, and its items are of the highest quality and built to last. Its Tavor rail is one of my favorites.

Using a tapered hand guard, the Tavor requires a special bottom rail for use with pistol grips, bipods or other accessories. Factory rails are plastic, but the AB Arms model is aluminum and contoured to fit perfectly. For customers looking for a pistol grip, the AB Arms T-Grip is the perfect size for this gun. Contoured to work with the Tavor, it provides a solid grip without adding bulk – and it even has a battery compartment.

When mounted to my Tavor while I tested the latest triggers, it proved excellent for CQB work. It provides a solid hold that is comfortable and easy to maintain. The shorter length allows for use on bags, barricades or other surfaces. Ambidextrous, it worked with several different light configurations.

Built from aluminum, the rail facilitated mounting my Atlas bipod for a solid platform from prone, or a rest when working from other flat surfaces. Both are of the highest quality, lightweight and mounted easily and solidly. If you're looking to stock Tavor accessories with solid workmanship and purposeful design, these are excellent examples.

Changing the Tavor trigger requires more effort. It's not difficult by any means, but it requires some tools and tear-down. If you have swapped barrels before, it only requires one more operation. Outside the barrel removal wrench, which you can get from Geissele, a punch and hammer do the trick. Customers can get through it using the Tavor armorer's manual available on the Internet given competent mechanical skills.

It works with all triggers, including the factory model. It requires some attention with the pre-travel adjustment, as each trigger pack is different. The Super Sabra required removal of pre-travel; the Timney and the Shooting Sight required the opposite.

Those who like the Timney will enjoy the difference the most, turning it into a true single-stage trigger. All of the trigger packs performed without any light primer strikes, failures to reset or any other issues. Adding the trigger bow was an upgrade across the board. The Tavor Lightning Trigger Bow is Scheduled for a spring 2015 release with a $99 retail price.

FINAL THOUGHTS

While there are certainly other upgrades for the bullpup Tavor, the trigger is the one most customers should look at first. The difference is noticeable, and it improves every aspect of its design.

It's easier to be accurate with shooting on the move and at long range. Faster repeat shots are the norm, and it is overall more enjoyable to shoot. Whether you install the new trigger bow or not, the improvement is huge. It really turns the Tavor into a more enjoyable rifle with no loss in reliability or usability. With time, more accessories will surface, but for now this is the easiest with the most bang for the buck.

All are priced within about $25 of each other, so it becomes mostly about personal preference. Either way, you'll send your customer home with a tricked-out rifle that will just be a ton more fun to use. **TR**

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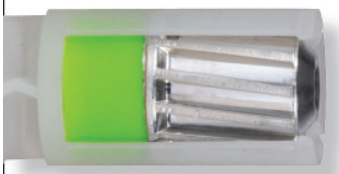
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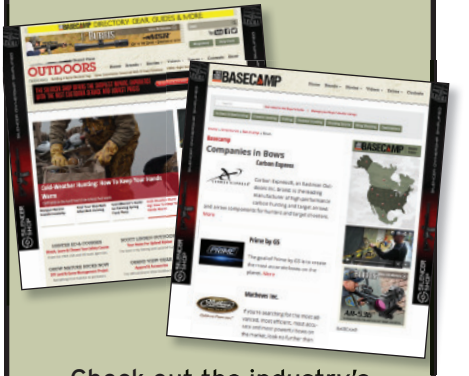
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WHAT IS BERRY COMPLIANCE AND SHOULD YOU WORRY ABOUT IT?

If you know the lingo and some of the basic rules, your store is free to sell foreign-made gear to military and government customers.

By Eric Graves

If you've been selling tactical equipment for a while, you've probably heard of the "Berry Amendment" or the term "Berry compliant," but you might not understand what those terms mean or how they relate to your business.

Essentially, "Berry compliant" equals "Made in the USA" — and who is not for that? But as we know, Made in the USA also equates to higher prices that some customers might not be able to afford. So it's important to determine if such items are worth stocking. On the other hand, there's a certain amount of pride in offering Made in the USA gear for sale, so we'll take a look at what Berry compliance actually means to you.

The Berry Amendment was first made into law in 1941 to promote the purchase of American-made goods and ensure that the military did not rely on crucial equipment manufactured in areas that could be controlled by an enemy. It was made permanent in 1994 and subsequently codified as 10 U.S.C. 2533a in 2002 by section 832 of Public Law 107-107. It's important to note that the Berry Amendment only applies to the Department of Defense. Additionally, it's separate from the "Buy American Act," which applies to all of the U.S. government.

While the Berry Amendment governs quite a few commodities, for the tactical retailer it covers textiles like clothing, tents or items of individual equipment manufactured from or containing covered fibers, yarns, fabrics or materials. All processing and manufacturing must be done in the U.S. and all of the material must be domestically sourced. For many of you that's quite a bit of your wares, but this doesn't mean that you must only stock Berry-compliant items.

There will be times that you'll run across items assembled here in the U.S. with non-Berry-complaint materials. Conversely, there are items assembled overseas from U.S.-made raw goods. Neither of these is Berry compliant — the item has to be completely made from American materials assembled by American workers in American factories.

I'd like to point out that this includes American territories such as Puerto Rico, and quite a few companies manufacture there in order to control costs.

If you sell genuine surplus military goods, these will assuredly be Berry compliant. Additionally, some newly manufactured items will only be available from domestic sources, so you're going to have some U.S.-made products on hand. However, the vast majority of your sales won't be to military units but rather to individuals using their own funds.

There are no regulations compelling service members to use their own money to purchase Berry-compliant items. Instead, they will be looking for the best bargain. Many foreign-made specialty items are of equal or higher quality to American-made goods due to the availability of materials and manufacturing processes available overseas. Still others are commodity items that must be cost-competitive.

There are exemptions from the Berry Amendment. and these are important to understand if you plan to sell to U.S. military organizations. Most contracting officers are well aware of the Berry Amendment and its provisions. However, many tactical stores sell directly to small units via the Government Purchase Card. In some cases, the responsible party may be aware of the Berry Amendment but not fully understand its application nor the existence of the Simplified Acquisition Threshold. It's important to familiarize yourself with them and to be able to direct government purchasers toward official websites that contain relevant information in order to make them more savvy buyers.

The most relevant exemption is if the sale is below the Simplified Acquisition Threshold of $150,000, it does not need to be Berry compliant. That amount is well below what the majority of tactical retailers will do for each transaction.

Regardless, few government purchase cards are authorized for such large transactions anyway. However, in case you do have a large purchase pending, this doesn't mean you can break a larger sale up into smaller parcels in order to come under the threshold. In such cases, the government views multiple purchases of the same item as a single purchase. The customer should take a look at Berry-compliant options, and their contracting office will most likely want to consider other purchasing options for such large buys.

Additionally, some items have built-in Berry waivers because they are unavailable from U.S. sources. These include some chemical warfare protective garments, some flame-resistant items and some life support components primarily used in the construction of parachuting equipment. Generally, these are items sold to government customers via large contracts.

Ultimately, as a tactical store operator, you are going to offer both U.S.- and foreign-made goods. The goal is to size up your customer base and determine what they're looking for in order to offer the right balance. Additionally, it's good to know the lingo and what it actually means when a government purchaser walks into your shop. **TR**



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