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SEE PAGE 4 FOR MORE INFO

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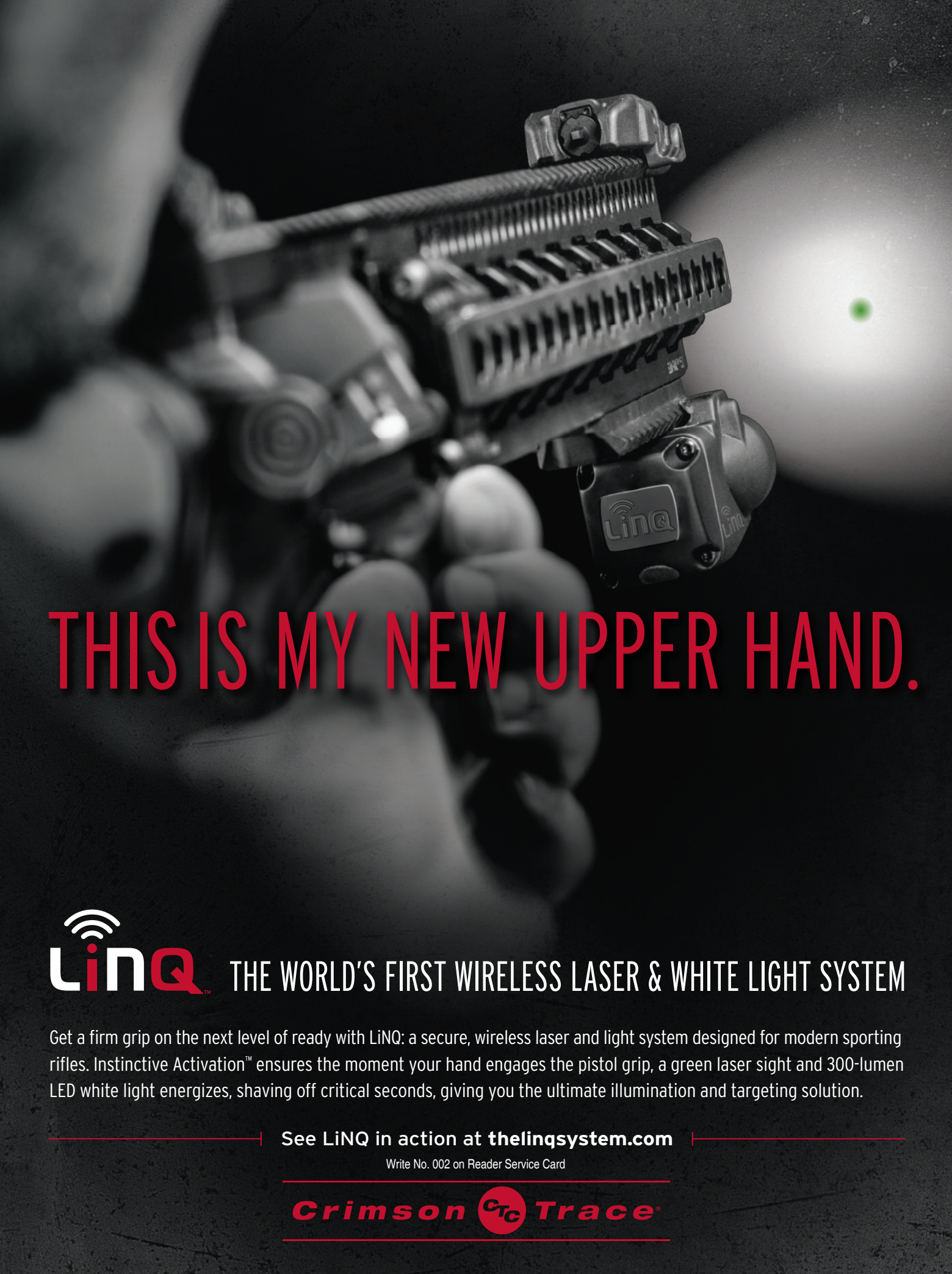
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22 LR



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22 LR



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5.56 NATO/223 REM



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22 LR



SCOPE NOT INCLUDED

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CONTENTS

VOL 2 • ISSUE 3
OCTOBER 2016

TACTICAL RETAILER













DEPARTMENTS

6 COUNTER INTELLIGENCE
How to properly mount a red-dot sight.
By David Bahde

10 THE CAGE
Hot new products that you need to have in stock.

18 DEBRIEF
Battle Arms Development: Creating a premium custom-parts market.
By Max Archer

22 MINUTE OF ANGLE
An Axe With A Big Edge: The Axelson tactical line of high-quality ARs.
By Jim Grant

48 THE LAST ROUND
The coming firearms panic-buy of 2016.
By Eric Graves

FEATURES

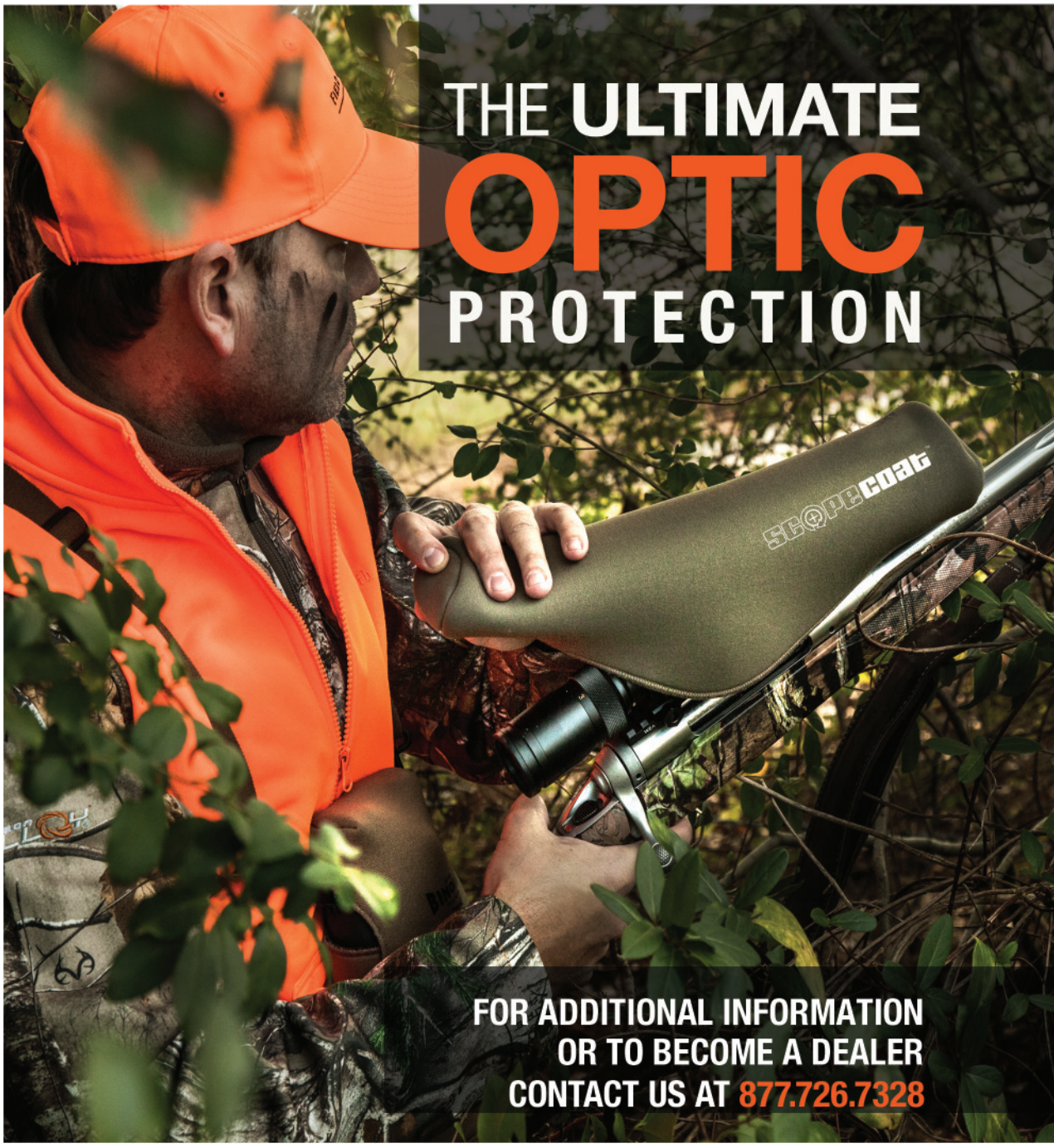
26 STAYING IN THE BLACK
With AR-15 sales rebounding, we take a look at new options in the market for that first-time buyer or the shooter looking for something a little different that won't break the bank.
By Michael O. Humphries

34 SIMUNITIONS AREN'T JUST FOR THE MILITARY ANYMORE
Commercial instructors can now use the force-on-force marker rounds for their clients and help make their program stand out from the crowd.
By Doug Larson

38 SOMETIMES SHORTER IS BETTER
From AR-15 pistols to SBRs to a growing assortment of accessories to make them, the market for pint-sized personal defense weapons is growing.
By Max Archer

42 ERATHR3 TRIES TO SHAKE UP THE MARKET ON CUSTOM 1911S
Drawing from the best in pistol training, high-end custom shops and top gun manufacturers, this new handgun maker is doing something different.
By David Bahde

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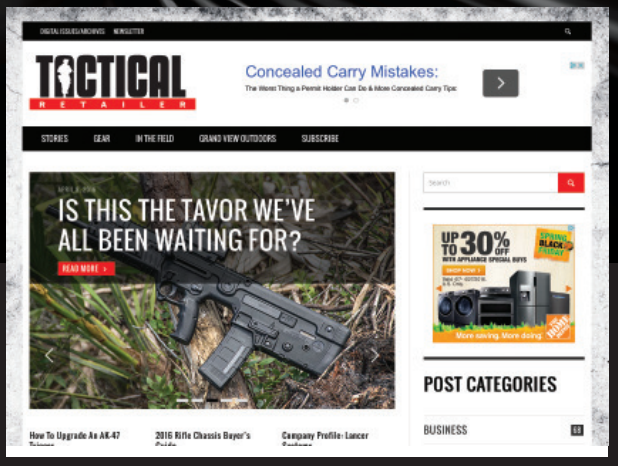
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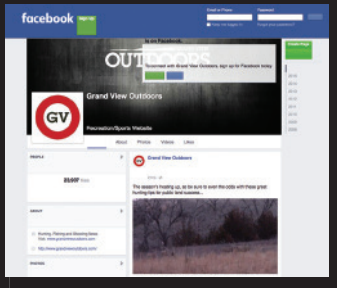


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The TANGO6 super-zoom 6X riflescope line has you covered from close quarter battle operations to long range shooting, from 3-Gun competitions to hunting dangerous game, from bolt-actions to MSR's. This premium scope is complete with our HDX™ optical system for extreme clarity and low-light performance, HellFire™ fiber optic and glass-etched illuminated reticles, first or second focal plane designs, innovative LockDown™ Zero System turrets with zero stop and reset and an intuitive rotation counter for extreme long range shooting. Includes one FREE SBT™ (SIG Ballistic Turret) custom lasered elevation dial calibrated to your unique ballistics and environmental conditions.
www.sigoptics.com/model/tango6



THE SIG SAUER ROMEO 4 IS HARDWIRED FOR BATTLE



ROMEO4 is the ultimate red-dot sight when fast, accurate target acquisition is a must. Whether it's a moving target, dangerous game at full charge, or a fast breaking tactical situation at close quarters. When things are moving fast and you need to get on target in a hurry, your sight has to work faster. No matter the lighting conditions, weather conditions, or terrain, the ROMEO4 red-dot sight has you covered—when it counts. You can shoot with confidence with both eyes open, on target yet aware of the situation at all times as it unfolds. And because it is a SIG SAUER®, you know the ROMEO4 is as tough and dependable as our firearms.www.sigoptics.com/model/romeo4

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EOTECHINC.COM

By David Bahde

HOW TO PROPERLY MOUNT A RED-DOT SIGHT



EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to the "Counter Intelligence" department in *Tactical Retailer*. Here our experts help retailers and their staff decode some of the basics of gun, gear and accessory care so they're not stumped by a customer who needs to know more than what's on the label.

Red-dot sights (RDS) continue to grow in popularity and have become all but mandatory on deployment or self-defense AR-style rifles. However, throwing them on and heading to the range after looking at a couple of pictures is not the best way to go about it.

There are a few considerations that will make the process much easier and more effective. Here is a simple list with a few steps on how to install and then zero your customer's rifle RDS.

First, take a few minutes to determine exactly how they will use their RDS prior to installation. Is it going to stand alone? Will there be a magnifier? Are they using a backup sight? If so, where do they want to them to appear inside the RDS when sighting through it? Is their rifle limited to CQB, or is it reaching out to 300 meters or so? Does the receiver rail have built-in elevation or slope? What kind of handguard do they have, and is it solid? In most cases, the handguard is the last place to mount an RDS, but, in others, it's all they have. In that case, it would need to be solid. Once you know exactly what they need, it's time to mount it up while considering the following:

- If possible, mount the RDS on the receiver. It is the most solid and is least likely to shift during recoil maintaining your zero. While some handguards are solid, others may not be, and the receiver remains the best place to mount a sight. Mounting on the hand guard can also subject the RDS to excessive heat which can damage the optic.
- Where it goes on the receiver rail is less critical if it is a stand-alone RDS. It can be mounted toward the front, back, in the middle or anywhere in between as long as you understand a few restrictions.

LIMITATIONS

- If the top rail is flat, the zero will not change significantly if moved forward or backward. It will change, but not always by much as each rifle is different. Many receivers build in elevation, or "slope," for optics. If so, moving by even a few notches may change it considerably. As a rule, always put it back in the same spot each time if removed.
- If the sight mount has knobs that stick out, make sure they do not interfere with the ejection port. Most can be moved so they are on the opposite side. Just make sure it does not affect proper operation under fire.
- Mount the magnifier first (if you use one) and insure it clears the backup sights. Check eye relief with the stock where the shooter normally has it with both eyes open, if possible, and move it as needed. Place the RDS in front of the magnifier and focus the dot in the magnifier. Try to match the height of the RDS to center in the magnifier. It will work if it is off by a little, but it is best to be centered.
- Zero the RDS without the magnifier first, then confirm on the range using the magnifier. Quality devices will see very little shift, but it is best to confirm that. You can use already zeroed iron sights to get close in the shop. Line the dot up so it sits on top of the front post when centered in the rear sight. That should get your customer on paper, but never consider that zeroed. The customer must confirm with the chosen ammunition on the range at all ranges. Charts are approximations and are just for comparison, but they must shoot their rifle.
- Once it's all in place, make sure it clears the charging handle, lines up properly and is tightly in place. Do not overtighten, no matter the mounting mechanism, as that would cause it to come loose under hard use as it wears the upper. Follow the instructions that came with the mount. Check periodically to make sure it has not come loose. I check every time it goes in the safe after using it.

Follow these guidelines, and it is a fairly simple task. Here are a few photographs to illustrate the process:

1 After loosening the locking mechanism, start with the solid part of the mount. Line it up with the slots in the rail and gently push it on the rail making sure it sits flat.



2 Make certain that the locking mechanism side lines up and it is flat on the rail, then hand tighten.



3 Push forward on the sight and tighten the knob, lever, etc. until the sight does not move and then as needed based on the instructions with the sight or mount.



4 Using the appropriate tool, align the dot so it sits on top of the front post of the iron sights while centered in the rear sight (assuming they are zeroed). Your sights will generally be in the center or lower third of the RDS depending on mounting height.



5 If your customer plans to use a magnifier, mount it first. Make sure it clears the rear sight and does not interfere with the AR's controls.



6 Adjust placement so there is proper eye relief, just like you would with any optic. Have the stock in the same place you would when deploying the carbine.



7 Install the RDS so it has proper clearance and lines up with the magnifier. Zero the RDS using the iron sights as before. Then, adjust the magnifier so the dot is completely in focus. Make certain your customer confirms zero on the range with the most-used ammunition. Zero with the RDS alone, then confirm with the magnifier in place.



8 Different spacers or mounts may be needed to match your magnifier. This is an example of where it sits too high.



9 This is what it looks like if the RDS is mounted too low. You want it to be as close to center as possible.



COUNTER INTELLIGENCE

10 Check that knobs and other parts of the mount do not interfere with the ejection port. If so, move the sight or reverse the mount so the knobs are on the other side.



11 On some rifles, the hand guard is the only place an RDS can be mounted. Make certain the hand guard is securely attached and does not move under recoil.



12 Other rifles may have a scout mount or a forward-mounted rail. Mini red dots are perfect for these applications. They mount the same way and can be placed anywhere on the rail.



13 A forward placement on a hand guard can work with some hand guards, but is not ideal and should be avoided if at all possible. It subjects the RDS to excessive heat and can cause failures.



14 If the hand guard on an AR is the only available space (carry handle rifles), the mini RDS is a far better choice. It can suffer the same issues, but is lighter and obstructs less of the view.



15 Typical placement of an RDS on an AR, about center allowing for clearance. Each individual is different, but, as a rule, most prefer them in the center or farther forward on the receiver rail.



16 Mounted all the way forward on the receiver rail, this MRO is on a dedicated-entry rifle. This placement is the easiest for me to see with the least obstructed view.



17 Quick-release levers should be closed using thumb pressure (or similar) only. Do not over tighten as it can cause premature wear on both the mount and the rail.



18 Fully locked into place and ready for confirmation at the range. **TR**



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THE CAGE

1 NITECORE – MH27

Nitecore's MH27 is a powerful, feature-rich flashlight that is equally useful in law enforcement, military, search and rescue, and general purpose applications.



The MH27 is a highly functional flashlight with an aerospace-grade aluminum alloy body, waterproof to IPX-8 standard and impact-resistant to 1.5 meters. It utilizes a CREE XP-L HI V3 LED to produce a max output of 1,000 lumens with a maximum beam distance of 462 meters. The MH27 is capable of four brightness levels and six special modes, including tricolored (red, green and blue) signaling lights. Maximum runtime of 708 hours via a single 18650 Li-ion battery.

- Micro-USB charging port
- Advanced temperature regulation technology
- Spring-loaded impact absorption mechanism with reverse polarity protection

MSRP: $89.95
WEBSITE: www.flashlight.nitecore.com

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2 DANIEL DEFENSE – DD MAGAZINE

Daniel Defense produces an AR-15-pattern magazine worthy of the quality and function that comes with the Daniel Defense name.

Daniel Defense's DD Magazine is the perfect companion to its line of 5.56 and .300 Blackout rifles. It is built from carbon-fiber-reinforced polymer to exacting standards and has a total capacity of 32 rounds with an improved feed-lip design and enhanced anti-tilt follower for smooth, reliable feeding. The DD Magazine also comes with an impact-absorbing baseplate, and it is designed to be easily disassembled for nearly effortless maintenance.

- Textured surfaces provide enhanced grip
- Non-snag design
- Made in the USA

MSRP: $20
WEBSITE: www.danieldefense.com

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3 MOSSBERG – MMR CARBINE RIFLE

The MMR Carbine Rifle is a versatile AR-style rifle that has been configured to satisfy the needs of both competitive and tactical shooters.

Mossberg's MMR Carbine is a modern sporting rifle chambered for 5.56 or .223 Remington that features a free-floating, anodized, A2-Style 16.25-inch barrel and a direct impingement gas system. The full-length flat-top rail holds adjustable front and rear target sights and allows shooters to further customize the rifle with their ideal optics and sights. The MMR also comes with a Magpul MOE grip and trigger guard as well as a slim-profile M-LOK forend, which allows shooters to attach their favorite accessories while keeping the overall weight of the rifle down.

- Weight: 6.75 lbs
- Choice of fixed position or six-position stock
- 1:8 twist rate

MSRP: $ 910
WEBSITE: www.mossberg.com

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4 COLT – DELTA ELITE



The Colt Delta Elite brings 10mm power to the time-trusted 1911 pistol platform.

Colt's original Delta Elite, a 1911-style pistol chambered for the powerful 10mm cartridge, is an iconic weapon. Now that it's available on the market again, the new Delta Elite offers shooters a reliable 10mm 1911 complete with an enhanced hammer, wide-slide serration, upswept beavertail grip safety and a lowered ejection port. Additionally, the Delta Elite comes with a Novak white dot front sight and Novak low-mount carry rear sight.

- 8+1 capacity
- Composite grips with Delta medallions
- Weight: 35oz.

MSRP: $1,099
WEBSITE: www.colt.com

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5 CAA – AKMAG

The AKMAG is designed to be as reliable as an AK, as well as lightweight and affordable.

CAA's AKMAG is a standard-capacity 30-round magazine designed for Kalashnikov-pattern rifles chambered for 7.62x39mm. Manufactured from lightweight, durable polymer, it features clear windows on both sides as well as a no-tilt, fluorescent orange follower and a mil-spec, heat-treated spring. Additionally, the mildly rough surface throughout the magazine body provides a non-slip, positive grip for retention in all kinds of conditions.

- Weight: 7.05 oz.
- Width: 2.75 inches
- Height: 8.1 inches

MSRP: $27
WEBSITE: usa.caagearup.com

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6 GRAND POWER – K22 X-TRIM

The K22 X-TRIM is an accurate competitive pistol chambered for the popular and inexpensive .22LR cartridge.

Grand Power's K22 X-TRIM is designed to provide shooters with a high-quality, accurate and attractive competition .22LR pistol. It features a steel frame and slide with an ergonomic polymer grip and a frame-mounted thumb safety. The X-TRIM also features a DA/SA action and a 5-inch fixed threaded barrel.

- 10+1 capacity
- 25.1 oz. unloaded
- Interchangeable backstraps
- Fiber Optic front sight, Elliason rear sight

MSRP: $788
WEBSITE: www.eagleimportsinc.com

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THE CAGE



7 MILWAUKEE TOOL – HARDLINE POCKET KNIVES

Milwaukee Tool's new Hardline Pocket Knives offer users hard-use blades made of durable D2 tool steel.

With the Hardline Pocket Knives, Milwaukee Tool sought to create an uncompromising series of carry knives, offering optimal performance in day-to-day use. To that end, they started with a D2 Steel blade that features a stone-washed black oxide finish for rust protection. The knife body includes a flipper with bearing system for a smooth, one-handed opening and a steel frame lock for a strong, secure hold during use. Hardline Pocket Knives are available in four models – the 2.5-inch Drop Point Smooth Blade; the 3-inch Drop Point Smooth Blade; the 3-inch Serrated Tanto Blade; and the 3.5-inch Recurve Drop Point Smooth Blade.

- Excellent for everyday carry
- Reversible tip-up belt clip
- Backed by a limited lifetime warranty

MSRP: $59.99 - $79.99
WEBSITE: www.milwaukeetool.com

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8 GREY GHOST GEAR – THE WANDERER

The Wanderer is a low-profile messenger bag constructed of durable waxed canvas for those looking for an inconspicuous, yet highly functional, load-carrying option.

Grey Ghost Gear's Wanderer messenger-style bag is designed to be feature-rich, yet unassuming, with waxed canvas construction and waterproof zippers. It comes with dual external end pockets that can carry a water bottle, rifle magazines or an IFAK.

A pull-over courier-style flap secures the bag with magnetic snaps and features two 9 x 5-inch zippered, tricot-lined pockets. The internal compartment is divided into two sections, including one that can carry a laptop and another for a PDW with collapsed stock or similar-sized items.

Additionally, The Wanderer also has two vertical front compartment zippers which open a gate to access small items. The reverse of this gate has four stretch mesh pockets and a pen scabbard.

- Dimensions: 20.5 x 11.5 x 4.5 inches
- Carry strap with adjustable seatbelt webbing
- Pleated rear pocket with hook-and-loop paneling for off-body handgun carry

MSRP: $235
WEBSITE: www.greyghostgear.com

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9 CMMG – MKW ANVIL IN .458 SOCOM

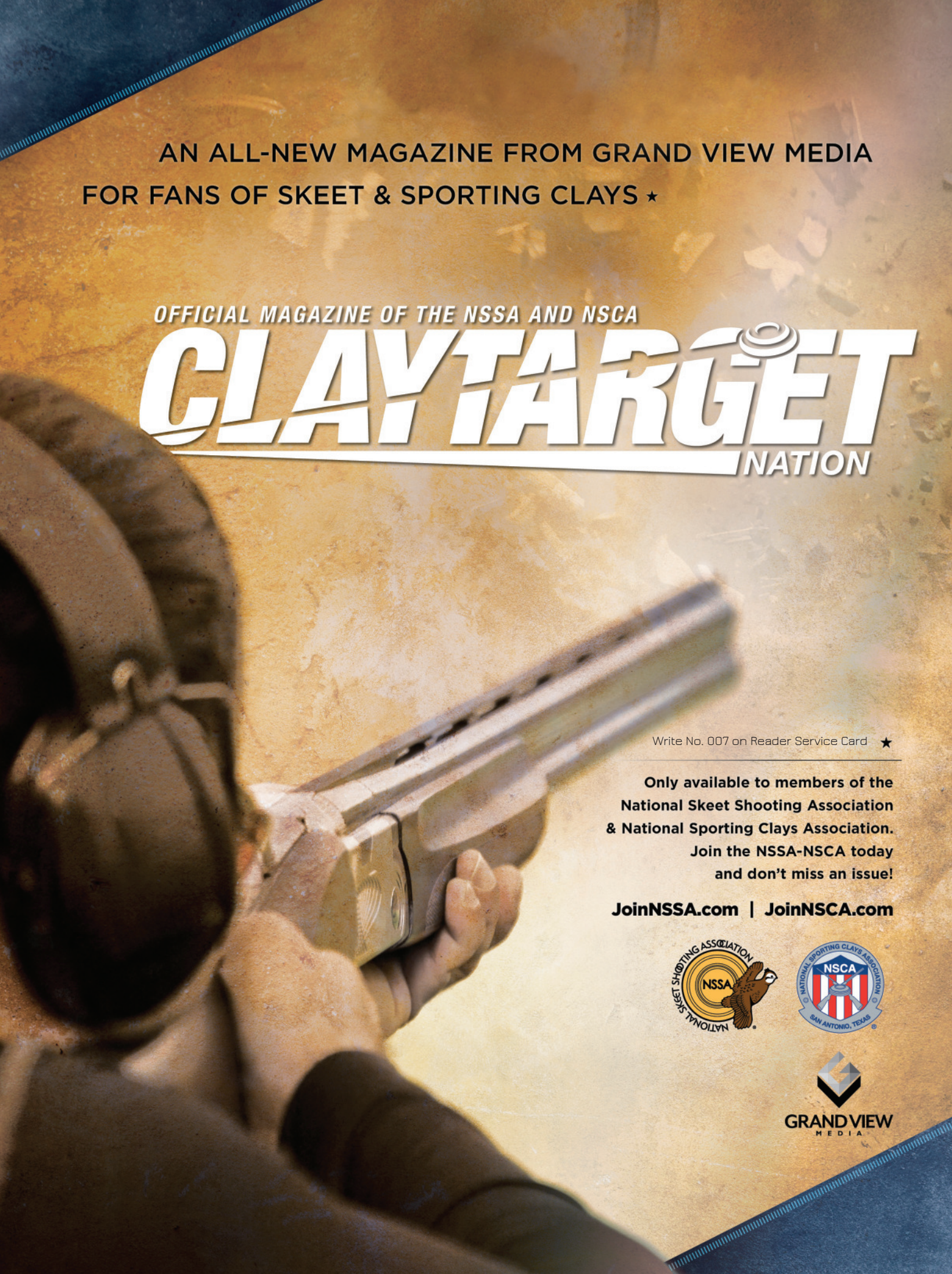
The MkW ANVIL is a purpose-built AR designed around the powerful .458 SOCOM cartridge.

The MkW ANVIL is a mid-sized AR-style rifle, specifically designed to handle the .458 SOCOM cartridge. The ANVIL is built on an AR-10-sized frame and features a magwell for standard AR-15 magazines, which can typically load up to 10 .458 SOCOM cartridges. The ANVIL utilizes CMMG's POWERBOLT design that incorporates a modified AR-10 bolt for increased durability. Additionally, the ANVIL is built with a carbine-length gas system and uses the SLR Rifleworks Sentry 7 adjustable gas block to configure the rifle for different loads of .458 SOCOM ammunition.

- Available in three configurations: ANVIL T, ANVIL XBE and ANVIL XBE2
- Includes one specially-modified Lancer L5 magazine optimized for use with .458 SOCOM
- Full-length Picatinny rail for mounting sights or optics

MSRP: $1,849.95-$2,149.95
WEBSITE: www.cmmginc.com

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THE CAGE

10 5.11 TACTICAL – RUSH LBD XRAY

The Rush LBD XRAY is a versatile tactical carryall bag that easily converts from a duffel to a backpack.



5.11's Rush LBD XRAY is a tactical duffel-style bag made from tear- and water-resistant 1050D nylon. It features a spacious 15.5 x 31 x 15.5-inch main compartment with a PALS-compatible platform for customizable storage and internal compression straps to hold gear in place.

Additionally, the LBD XRAY can be converted into a backpack, making it ideal for uses including range, outdoors and as a general travel bag.

- Reinforced grab handles
- ID/Flag Patch loop panel
- Self-healing YKK zippers
- Duraflex hardware

MSRP: $139.99
WEBSITE: www.511-tactical.com

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11 BUSHNELL – TROPHY XTREME 2.5-10X 44MM

The Trophy Xtreme 2.5-10x 44-mm scope is a durable water-, fog- and shock-proof scope with maximized performance for both hunting and sporting.

The Trophy Xtreme 2.5-10x 44-mm scope features fully multi-coated optics, as well as Bushnell's Rainguard HD waterproofing and fogproof lenses for optimal use in humid or moist environments. The scope body is 100 percent shockproof and consists of a matte-finish one-piece 30-mm tube with integrated saddle.

- Available with Multi-X or DOA LR600 reticles
- 1/4 MOA fingertip windage and elevation adjustments
- Second focal plane

MSRP: $209.99
WEBSITE: www.bushnell.com

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12 BUTLER CREEK – SAVAGE ARMS A17 25-ROUND MAGAZINE

The Butler Creek A17 25-round magazine offers increased ammunition capacity for the popular A17 semi-auto rifle.



Butler Creek's A17 Magazine is designed for the Savage Arms A17 and offers shooters 25 rounds of continuous .17HMR fire versus the 10-round rotary magazine provided with the rifle. This increased capacity allots shooters more time behind the trigger. Additionally, the A17 magazine can be loaded traditionally or by using a loading-assist lever located on the side of the magazine body.

- Stainless steel spring, all metal header and feed lips
- Two magazines can be clipped together
- Round count indicator featured on side of magazine

MSRP: $29.99
WEBSITE: www.butlercreek.com

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THE CAGE

13 FEDERAL PREMIUM – 9MM MICRO HST PERSONAL DEFENSE

Micro HST 9mm Luger offers a full-power defensive load specifically for subcompact handguns.

Federal Premium's Micro HST 9mm Luger is the latest in its line of Micro HST ammunition that is designed for optimal use in subcompact handguns. It features a 150gr projectile, providing desired penetration for personal defense use. The heavier round and lower velocity is also designed to decrease felt recoil and noise.

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WEBSITE: www.federalpremium.com

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14 BLACKHAWK! – KNOXX SPECOPS GEN III STOCK

The Knoxx SpecOps Gen III Stock builds upon the capability of the original SpecOps Stock, reducing felt recoil by up to 80 percent.

The Blackhawk! Knoxx SpecOps Gen III Stock utilizes a two-stage patented recoil reduction system to reduce shooter-felt recoil by up to 80 percent. The stock is adjustable to six positions, and the integrated pistol grip is optimized for tactical shooting techniques. The included forend features an integrated hand stop and includes a multi-position Picatinny accessory mount.

- Multiple ambidextrous sling mounts included
- Compatible with receiver-mounted shell carriers
- Straight cheek weld reduces cheek slap

MSRP: $159.95
WEBSITE: www.blackhawk.com

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15 RUGER – AMERICAN PISTOL

Ruger's packed a lot of features into an affordable handgun.

Ruger's performance-tested American Pistol features a recoil-reducing barrel cam, low-mass slide, low center of gravity and low bore axis. It's available in 9mm Luger and .45 auto with or without a manual safety. The pre-tensioned striker system allows for positive ignition without a heavy trigger pull, and the trigger's got a short takeup with positive reset. The modular wrap-around grip system lets you adjust palm swell and trigger reach.

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BATTLE ARMS DEVELOPMENT:

CREATING A PREMIUM CUSTOM-PARTS MARKET

By Max Archer

When we see a top-end custom AR-15, it is unusual to not also see a Battle Arms Development Ambidexturous Safety Selector (BAD-ASS) or a set of pivot pins installed.

Battle Arms Development created the custom billet ambidextrous safety selector market for the AR-15 the same way KNS Precision Inc. did with anti-rotate pins. None of us knew this was something we had to have on our custom AR-15s until they came along, but retailers and customers could not get the money out of our pockets fast enough to install them.

Battle Arms Development's product line has expanded to encompass its own take on over 80 percent of the parts on an AR-15. We had an opportunity to speak with Battle Arms Development President George Huang and learn about how the company has evolved over the years.



Battle Arms Development Ambidextrous Safety Selector

TR: Many believe that Battle Arm Development started the custom AR15 parts business. How did these great ideas come to fruition and affect the market?



Monolithic Lower Receiver + VERT Stock System



Battle Arms Development President George Huang

Huang: We were not the first custom AR-15 parts manufacturer and, technically, not even the first ambi-selector on the market, but we were the first to offer a unique design. People loved it, and customer response has been significant. We have created a market that never existed before, all thanks to retailers and customers supporting us. It started for me as an everyday shooter who was getting frustrated with the lack of part options for firearms. It was so infuriating that I decided to do something about it.

TR: Many people don't know that you are neither a gun industry guy nor

machine shop owner and that you are actually an architectural engineer. Tell us more about that.

Huang: That is correct. I am not from the firearm industry. I am an architectural engineer by trade with most of my work centered around theme park engineering, which was a fun job. A lot of that is working with casinos, Disney, Universal Studios, and other similar companies to develop out-of-the-box ideas for theme park designs and structures. With a day job of doing things like designing roller coasters and themed space stations, I couldn't help but tear apart a gun to figure out how to make it better. I look at development and engineering differently than someone with a firearms or machine shop background.

TR: Was the ambi-selector the first product?

Huang: The M1A/M14/M1 gas cylinder lock wrenches were actually the first products, but the ambi-selector came next. We started the company in April 2009 and went live with our website on July 4, 2009.

TR: Has the growth in demand for AR15 custom parts driven your business to expand?

Huang: Our business focus has always been to start small and slow. We have seen a lot of great companies struggle with overpurchasing equipment and facilities. We are extremely fiscally conservative. Although we have needed to expand for some time, we wanted to take the right expansion steps for the right reasons. Customer demand has remained high and consistent for our products, so we are planning to finally expand our facilities this year.

TR: Can you talk about your design philosophy?

Huang: Everything we build is designed with a purpose, not to just look cool. A cool design was the byproduct



VERT Stock close-up



Battle Arms Development's unique buffer sytem was created to use with the VERT stock. Notice that the buffer is tapered so that it fits inside the back of the bolt carrier to eliminate bolt bounce.



A close-up of the Battle Arms Development lower receiver

of lots of functional design. Our design goals are safety, functionality and innovation while also looking aesthetically cool.

We always have a logical and functional need driving the design, but we do add some style. We certainly could have just created a duplicate of a mil-spec selector and made it ambidextrous and in titanium, but one of our goals is to develop something that is unlike anyone else's product.

Dimpling, for example, looks cool on the buffer tube, but the dimpling is an engineered feature to reduce weight while retaining strength. The buffer tube dimples will support future accessories that will snap on to those dimples.

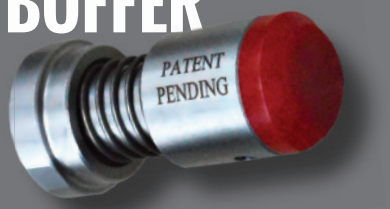
We are always blowing the designs up to a microscopic level to analyze our designs. Many times, some little edge, curve or pivot can destroy a great design. When building our ultra-light rifle, we had to go back to a point of hardcore R&D. The research on the ultra-light rifle was extensive to assure that we analyzed every aspect of it to ensure that we were not overlooking any potential areas where we could reduce weight without compromising strength.

TR: How are you using existing mil-spec parts as an inspiration for a new part?

Huang: We look at the mil-spec standards from a couple different perspectives. Sometimes we ask how this part could be better, and sometimes we use the dimensional requirements to create something new on a blank screen. Everyone told us that you could not make a pivot pin better, but we made it functionally easier to pull with the fingers and to install. We also added a divot so that punches don't slip off the pin if it's pushed out. We even offer a model made in titanium. So, we did make an old design better.

Our billet bolt catch increases surface contact, reduces weight and makes it easier to use with less likelihood of accidental release. When we started designing our own lower receivers, we started with a mil-spec fire control pocket and mag well, and then everything else was engineered around it to

BATTLE ARMS DEVELOPMENT BUFFER



Battle Arms Development came up with this unique buffer system to accompany their new PDW stock dubbed "VERT". It is designed for 5.56/.223 direct gas impingement systems but can also work with a piston driven AR as long as the rear internal dimensions of the bolt carrier is Mil-Spec. This buffer ensures proper functionality of the firearm and has been optimized to work with carbine length, mid-length and rifle length gas systems. Additionally, the buffer has been designed with a taper that fits inside the back of the bolt carrier group to prevent what is known as bolt bounce. For more information or to see about becoming a dealer for these PDW stocks, please visit:

www.battlearmsdevelopment.com



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deliver the strongest and most functionally rich receiver we could.

TR: We have seen a lot of pricing fluctuations in the industry over the last decade. How has this impacted your customers and dealers?

Huang: Battle Arms is not going to play the 'what's-on-sale-this-week' game or seasonally discount items. In seven years, our prices have not changed, even during the periods of high demand.

We have an MSRP and an enforced MAP pricing, which means that dealers should never have to get into a price war on any of our products. Dealers find that our products move and deliver 40-percent margins, which means that the inventory and their money is not just sitting there.

TR: Has your business been impacted by some of the cash-crunched manufacturers you work with?

Huang: Unfortunately, it has. In some cases, we have restructured some of our terms for the slow-paying OEMs. Even though we are just supplying selectors to some OEM companies, some rather big names have had a hard time paying us. We never want to be in a situation where we have to chase down people for payment.

TR: What would you like to tell retailers about your Vert PDW lower receiver, which is arguably the most expensive production lower in the industry?

Huang: I think the first point is that none of our retailers have been able to keep it in stock. The Vert PDW comes with our parts, grip and stock system, but not everyone can spend $900 on a lower receiver.

The incredibly short collapsible stock was a joint effort with Jeff Cross at CMT, which was combined with our PDW lower and his VERT stock system into a monolithic integrated design. The Vert PDW represents all of the design innovations that we created in one product.

Unlike a bolt-together custom build, all of the parts are designed to work together. There is a lot of attention to the design of how everything works together. For example, the right-side guide rods are short so they won't crash into the ambidextrous bolt release like other collapsible stocks.

TR: Give us your take on the state of the firearms industry these days.

Huang: The industry has reached a point where the big companies have consolidated and are now run by venture capitalists or boards of directors.

Sure, some innovation will come out of those companies, but the real firearms advances are being made within the smaller, more agile companies.

Some of those trends are good, such as rethinking how a collapsible stock could be designed, but some aren't. One such idea is to cut holes in things to drop weight, but, structurally, I typically ask, 'Have you engineered those cuts, and does the gun need that weight from a safety, functional and operational perspective?'

Reducing the fat is ok through engineering, but too often the trend has been for companies to develop something that's 'cool' with little regard for safety or function. **TR**



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AN AXE WITH A BIG EDGE:

THE AXELSON TACTICAL LINE OF HIGH-QUALITY ARs

By Brian McCombie

If you are going to make and sell AR-platform rifles in our currently AR-saturated market, you are going to have to have an edge, maybe several.

Enter the Axelson Combat 5.56 rifle, complete with a number of appealing factors.

The Axelson Combat 5.56 is one such rifle in the growing lineup of ARs made by Axelson Tactical of Minden, Nevada. Over the last couple months, I've had the opportunity to use three Axelson rifles at the range and in the field, followed by some concerted range time with a new Combat 5.56 specifically for this review. Firing hundreds of rounds through the Axelson ARs proved to me that these are quality rifles that are made to exact specifications. Axelson's are accurate and dependable, and they will be putting rounds downrange years after other ARs are too nicked up to go on.

Axelson Tactical is a relative newcomer to the tactical market. It was launched a few years ago by Jeff Axelson who named the company in honor of his brother, Petty Officer 2nd Class Matthew Axelson, a United States Navy SEAL who died in 2005.

Matthew was one of the four SEALs who were air-dropped into the Hindu Kush of Afghanistan in June 2005 on a mission to locate a top Taliban leader. The mission was called Operation Red Wings, and it was the basis for the 2013 movie "Lone Survivor."

Matthew died that June day on a desolate Afghan mountain slope, fighting until the end to save his fellow SEALs and taking out a large number of Taliban fighters in the process. He was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross for his actions — the Navy's second highest award for valor.

To honor his brother's memory as a sibling, a SEAL and a warrior who never quit, Jeff founded Axelson Tactical, offering tactical gear, clothing and firearms.

"Many in our family have served," Jeff said. "My grandfather and his brother were career Navy men and were on the U.S.S. Pennsylvania in Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. My grandmother was a Marine for the duration of World War II. My father and Uncle Dean were in the Army Infantry and fought in the Vietnam War. Duty to this country and never quitting run deep with us."

My first experience with an Axelson





AR was using a Combat 300BLK on a predator hunt in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. While the predators did not cooperate, the rifle was a pleasure to shoot. I put over 100 rounds of 300 Blackout through the rifle between sighting in, changing out optics a couple times and just practicing. I didn't have a single feeding or ejection problem, and I was soon pegging three and four rounds into a circle the size of a nickel at 100 yards.

A month later, I got to use a friend's Combat .308, running two boxes of ammunition through it at the shooting range. While it was obviously heavier than its 300 BLK cousin, the Combat .308 was just as reliable and accurate. Plus, it had that .308 punch. Recoil was also stouter, of course, but also very manageable.

Then, I spent some time at the range with a new, "right out of the box" Combat 5.56 rifle — also called the AXE-15. I

SPECS

Model: Axelson Combat 5.56

Upper: Axelson Tactical Forged 7075-T6 Aluminum Hard-Coat Anodized

Lower: Axelson Tactical Forged 7075-T6 Aluminum Hard-Coat Anodized

Rail System: 14-inch Slim Profile Lightweight M-Lock Rail

Butt Stock: B5 Systems Bravo Stock

Trigger: ALG Combat Trigger

Lower Parts Kit: CMMG

Gas Tube: Carbine Length BCM

Gas Block: Low Profile .650 BCM

Buffer System: BCM

Charging Handle: Strike Industries with Extended Latch

Bolt Carrier Group: Axelson Tactical Matte Finish Nickel Boron

Grip: BCM Gunfighter Mod 1

Muzzle Brake: Axelson Tactical Talon Muzzle Brake

Barrel: As tested, Faxon Chrome Lined 16-inch. Also available in an 18-inch version. 1/8 Twist Rate on both barrel lengths.

Weight: 6 pounds, four ounces, empty

Price: $1,649.00.

www.axelsontactical.com



topped it with a Swarovski Z6i a 1-6x24mm scope. During the course of my testing, I used at least 20 rounds of four different .223 Rem cartridges, including Hornardy Superformance Varmint with a 53-grain VMAX bullet, Liberty Silverado with a 55-grain lead-free bullet, a Remington Premier Match, 77-grain Sierra Match King bullet and the Team Never Quit training round with a 45-grain frangible bullet.

Accuracy: From what I experienced, the Combat 5.56 will drill the bullseye all day long. My best 100-yard group was at .75 inches with the Hornady Superformance Varmint. Team Never Quit frangible was second just under an inch. I was firing from a padded rest, so I would expect even tighter groups with a Lead Sled or a similar, extremely solid platform.

Functionality: The Combat 5.56 cycled every round without a problem, kicking out the brass a good six feet to my right. Looking over the brass, I found no damage or dents on the bodies or necks and no scratches or claw marks on the rims that would suggest some problem with extraction or with an overzealous extractor.

The bolt catch engaged the bolt easily and held it in place firmly. The spring on the magazine release was taunt, but not too tight. With a solid push on the release, the magazine popped right out. The Strike Industries extended charging handle applied good rearward leverage. The fire-safe lever moved smoothly between stations.

I am not sure why the forward assist is becoming less popular on ARs, but it functioned well here. Certainly, leaving off the assist means less expense to a manufacturer, but I'd argue it's quite possible to short stroke a round and have it not chamber correctly. So, I was glad to see that Axelson Tactical still includes the forward assist on its rifles.

Trigger: My Combat 5.56 came with an ALG trigger that had a crisp let off and almost zero creep. The Axelson rifles can also be used with a Geissele trigger at an additional cost. I would have no problem using the ALG trigger in any scenario whether it's for tactical, hunting, competition. It is far better than one of its gritty Mil Spec cousins, though it doesn't have as light of a pull as its pricier Geissele counterpart.

Ergonomics: The stock extended easily and slid back into position without a hitch. The nice swell along the rear and side of the B5 Systems Bravo Stock provided a good cheek weld.

I liked the Slim Profile Lightweight M-Lock Rail and handguard. It fit my hand well, providing a rock solid grip without digging into the skin, and kept my hand cool even after dozens of rounds.

All in all, the Combat 5.56 felt great in-hand and came up to the shoulder easily. I did some practice going quickly from low ready to the shoulder and firing several rounds downrange. The light rifle (under seven pounds) went right into the pocket of my shoulder naturally and lined up on target fast.





The Combat 5.56 is essentially a custom AR. All Axleson rifles are made one at a time from top components, and you can tell that they are solid, rattle-free rifles before you finish the first magazine. All of this does come at a price as these are not bargain-basement rifles.

Jeff Axelson told me that, in keeping with the memory of his brother, Matt, all of his rifles are made to perform in the field and to keep working in spite of the worst field conditions.

Of course, you can have problems with any rifle at any and all price points, but I would expect the Combat 5.56 to be a trouble-free rifle for thousands of rounds and capable of taking some rough handling. You can't ask for more in an AR. **TR**

This Is The Most Important Election Ever

With the balance of the Supreme Court at stake, this election could very well affect our constitutional rights. It is crucial that firearms retailers become informed about candidates' positions and spread the message about this year's **#GUNVOTE** at every possible opportunity.

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- Display **#GUNVOTE** materials in your store.
- Encourage your customers and employees to register to vote.
- Visit **gunvote.org** and encourage others to do the same.
- On Election Day, **#GUNVOTE!**



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SALES ADD-ON

BULLETPROOF HOME DEFENSE: U.S. PALM'S DEFENDER SYSTEM



With a price range of $125 to $375, the Defender Handgun combination holster, carrier and armor system from U.S. PALM is an ideal option for price-conscious buyers looking to acquire body armor.

The carrier system – available in five color options – integrates a pistol pouch, three matching magazine or accessory pouches, and optional level IIIA soft armor protection. The armor is available in the front panel or both the front and rear. The rig can also function as a plate carrier that holds rifle protection plates.

The result is an affordable and adaptable system that provides you with your handgun, ammunition, gear and armored protection.

STAYING IN THE BLACK

With AR-15 sales rebounding, we take a look at new options in the market for the first-time buyer or the shooter who's looking for something a little different that won't break the bank.

By Michael O. Humphries

The multi-thousand dollar AR up on the wall might be what draws customers into the store, but, in most cases, they will walk out with a price-point tactical rifle. The vast majority of these people are likely first-time buyers who may not know exactly what they want.

"Of all the tactical rifles I sell, 90 percent of them are budget guns," explained Rob Maungyoo, owner of Clayton Guns in Clayton, North Carolina. "The customer base who is buying these in my shop is about 75 percent newbies. These buyers are roughly split up into two groups where one half know nothing about tactical rifles, and the other half have read just about everything about them on the internet, but have never physically handled one."

This is an important segment of the market that retailers ignore at their own financial peril. If you do not have your gun racks stocked with affordable tactical rifles, you are leaving money on the table. So, what should you do about it?

We created an overview of the top 12 tactical rifles priced around $1,000 or below. It is designed to offer you a good breadth of options to please a range of customers. From ARs and AKs to .223s and .308s, there is something here for just about every type of customer.

Impact of Banning Modern Sporting Rifles and Semi-Automatic Shotguns in the United States[1]

	Lost Jobs	Lost Wages	Lost Output
Direct	11,753	$486,734,458	$1,714,325,680
Supplier	5,424	$337,777,031	$1,041,691,084
Induced	9,235	$434,417,928	$1,333,889,634
Total	26,413	$1,258,929,416	$4,089,906,398

Federal Business Taxes	$309,766,990
State Business Taxes	$254,243,057
Pittman-Robertson Aid	$82,336,534

[1]Based on figures developed for the National Shooting Sports Foundation by John Dunham & Associates, 2013

STAYING IN THE BLACK

1 Colt Expanse M4

If you are looking to stock a 5.56 or .223 AR with some serious name recognition for a good price, then look no further than the flattop Colt Expanse M4. At its heart, the Expanse M4 is all Colt. It has most of the familiar controls of an M4 carbine-configured firearm as well as the same forged 7075-T6 aluminum upper and lower receivers of any Colt AR. This is a lot of carbine for a very palatable MSRP of $699.

Where the Expanse differs from Colt's other M4 Carbine-style firearms is in the exclusion of two features that most shooters will not miss. It does not feature an ejection port dustcover or a forward assist unit. However, every other standard control and feature of a semi-auto, 16-inch-barreled AR is included.

MODEL: Expanse M4
CALIBER: 5.56 NATO/.223 Rem.
ACTION: Direct gas impingement, semi-auto
BARREL: 16.1 inches
OA LENGTH: 32-35.5 inches
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 30
WEIGHT: 6.44 pounds
STOCK: Six-position collapsible
SIGHTS: Picatinny rail, winged post front
FINISH: Matte black
MSRP: $699

2 Armalite DSR10

What if you have a customer wanting a 7.62 or .308 AR with a trusted brand name behind it? Consider stocking the Armalite DSR10 Defensive Sporting Rifle. It provides shooters with a classic AR-10-style firearm in modernized form, – all at an MSRP of $1,049. Part of the AR-10 "A Series," the DSR10 is designed to feed from readily available Magpul-pattern magazines.

The upper and lower receivers are forged 7075-T6 aluminum, and the 16-inch barrel is double-lapped and chrome-lined. To help keep costs down and allow you to equip the rifle to customer preferences, the DSR10 has an integral strip of Picatinny rail on the upper receiver as well as on the gas block.

Despite its 7.62 NATO power, the rifle weighs in at a light 7.9 pounds, and the six-position collapsible stock enhances its compactness and portability.

MODEL: DSR10
CALIBER: 7.62 NATO/.308 Win.
ACTION: Direct gas impingement, semi-auto
BARREL: 16 inches
OA LENGTH: 35-38.3 inches
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 20
WEIGHT: 7.9 pounds
STOCK: Six-position collapsible
SIGHTS: None, Picatinny rails
FINISH: Matte black
MSRP: $1,049





3 Century Arms RAS47

While some may still have lingering reservations about the AK being the "gun of the enemy," the American shooting public has been warming up to it in recent years. And why not? It's tough, rugged and reliable.

Fittingly, the new RAS47 from Century Arms is described by the company as being 100-percent American made, so now you can stock an AK-pattern rifle made by Americans for Americans.

Featuring a lightweight stamped steel receiver, wooden stock set and traditional 7.62x39mm chambering, the RAS47 is priced at a reasonable MSRP of $700. While the RAS47 follows the general pattern of an AKM (the modernized version of the AK), it does have some upgrades, including a notch cutout in the safety lever for manually locking back the bolt, a proprietary pistol grip with finger grooves and a skeletonized bolt carrier.

MODEL: RAS47
CALIBER: 7.62x39mm
ACTION: Piston-driven semi-auto
BARREL: 16.5 inches
OA LENGTH: 37.25 inches
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 30
WEIGHT: 7.5 pounds (empty)
STOCK: Wood
SIGHTS: Adjustable front post and leaf rear
FINISH: Matte black
MSRP: $700

4 Del-Ton DT Sport Lite

If you're looking to stock an AR with a unique selling point, look no further than the Del-Ton DT Sport Lite. Reasonably priced at an MSRP of $649, what makes the carbine stand out is its light weight of a mere 5.8 pounds when empty.

It achieves its feathery feel through the use of a lightweight profile barrel built from 4140 chrome moly vanadium steel and a unique upper receiver. The upper is made from forged 7075 T6 aluminum and is devoid of a forward assist, shell deflector and ejection port dustcover. This gives you everything you need and nothing you don't, keeping both its cost and weight down.

In overall design, the DT Sport Lite is configured generally like a civilian-legal M4 Carbine, from its 16-inch barrel to its six-position collapsible stock.

MODEL: DT Sport Lite
CALIBER: 5.56 NATO/.223 Rem.
ACTION: Direct gas impingement, semi-auto
BARREL: 16 inches
OA LENGTH: 32.5-36.25 inches
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 30
WEIGHT: 5.8 pounds
STOCK: Six-position collapsible
SIGHTS: Picatinny rail, winged post front
FINISH: Matte black
MSRP: $649.99





STAYING IN THE BLACK

5 DPMS .308 Sportical

Priced at an MSRP of $1,029, yet still packing in 7.62 NATO/.308 Win. power, the DPMS .308 Sportical is a great product for your shelves.

The heart of the rifle is its receiver system made from an extruded 7029-T6 aluminum upper receiver mated to a billet 7029-T6 aluminum lower. The upper receiver features a flattop with an integral Picatinny rail and "slick sides" with no forward assist, shell deflector or ejection port cover. The gas block features a strip of Picatinny rail, making the carbine ready to accept your customers' sights or optics.

Anyone familiar with an M4 carbine-style rifle will be right at home with the .308 Sportical, from its six-position collapsible stock to its round "Glacier Guard" handguards and A2-pattern birdcage flash suppressor. The Sportical weighs in at a manageable 8.3 pounds.

MODEL: .308 Sportical
CALIBER: 7.62 NATO/.308 Win.
ACTION: Direct gas impingement
BARREL: 16 inches
OA LENGTH: 32.5 to 36.5 inches
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 20
WEIGHT: 8.3 pounds
STOCK: Six-position collapsible
SIGHTS: None
FINISH: Matte black
MSRP: $1,029

6 Kel-Tec SU-16A

If you want to stock something unique that will definitely catch a potential customer's eye, look no further than the 5.56 Kel-Tec SU-16A (Sport/Utility) rifle. Unique in every way, the lightweight SU-16A is designed to fold in half for ease of storage and transportation. The semi-automatic SU-16A weighs in at an ultra-light 5 pounds and feeds from AR-15/M16 magazines.

Priced at an MSRP of $676, the SU-16A also features an interesting forend that doubles as a folding bipod support, and the stock can store two 10-round magazines or a single 20- or 30-round magazine.

The rifle employs a long-stroke piston system of operation, and an integral Picatinny rail adorns the top of the polymer receiver. In fact, the SU-16A's construction makes extensive use of lightweight polymers.

MODEL: SU-16A
CALIBER: 5.56 NATO
ACTION: Long-stroke piston
BARREL: 18.5 inches
OA LENGTH: 26.4-37.4 inches
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 10 (higher-capacity magazines available)
WEIGHT: 5 pounds
STOCK: Hybrid fixed/folding
SIGHTS: Picatinny rail, peep rear and post front
FINISH: Matte black
MSRP: $676.36



SALES ADD-ON

MAGPUL MBUS PRO LR

While Magpul may have made a name for itself in the creative use of rugged polymers, the MBUS Pro series takes a bit of a different tack. A folding back-up sight for rail-equipped ARs, the unit is manufactured from steel for added durability.

The new adjustable LR variant of the design employs an elevation adjustment wheel for striking targets at a range of distances. This is a great option to offer a buyer who is looking to upgrade his AR without breaking the bank.

Priced at an MSRP of $129.95, this Magpul unit offers a lot of bang for its buck.



7 Mossberg MMR Carbine

When it comes to providing your customers with a lot of bang for their buck, Mossberg and its 500-series shotguns are obvious choices. With its new MMR Carbine, Mossberg has carried over those same principles into the AR.

Priced at an MSRP of $910, the 5.56 NATO/.223 Rem. MMR Carbine is designed as an enhanced M4 carbine-style firearm with numerous upgrades. These include a free-floating 16.25-inch barrel surrounded by a slim profile Magpul M-LOK handguard, matching Magpul MOE grip and adjustable target sights. An integral strip of Picatinny rail on the flattop upper receiver mates up with a matching strip of rail atop the forend.

While the upper receiver does not feature a dustcover over the ejection port or a forward assist, it does sport a shell deflector. Rounding out the package is a collapsible, six-position buttstock.

MODEL: MMR Carbine
CALIBER: 5.56 NATO/.223 Rem.
ACTION: Direct gas impingement, semi-auto
BARREL: 16.25 inches
OA LENGTH: 32.5-35.75 inches
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 30
WEIGHT: 6.75 pounds
STOCK: Six-position collapsible
SIGHTS: Rail-mounted rear unit, winged post front
FINISH: Matte black
MSRP: $910

8 PTR Industries G.I. R

If you are looking for something a little different for your shelves, the G.I. R rifle from PTR Industries is a great choice. Based on the classic HK G3 rifle, the 7.62 NATO/.308 Win. G.I. R is a faithful semi-automatic recreation of this battle-proven warrior, all for an MSRP of $1,025.

The PTR G.I. R features a welded-on rail atop the stamped steel receiver and employs the unique roller-locked action of the original HK G3. This system does away with a traditional gas system and instead uses rollers that lock into the trunnion to keep the action closed until the chamber pressures drop to safe levels.

The rifle features a green polymer stock set with a rugged Parkerized finish, an 18-inch barrel topped with a flash hider and a paddle magazine release system that harkens back to the military original. It weighs in at 9.75 pounds.

MODEL: PTR G.I. R
CALIBER: 7.62 NATO/.308 Win.
ACTION: Roller-locked, delayed blowback
BARREL: 18 inches
OA LENGTH: 40.5 inches
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 20
WEIGHT: 9.75 pounds
STOCK: Fixed
SIGHTS: Drum rear, ringed post front
FINISH: Parkerized
MSRP: $1,025





STAYING IN THE BLACK

9 Ruger AR-556

While Ruger may be relatively new to the AR market, it has made a big splash since it released the popular SR-556 series of piston-drive AR rifles. While priced reasonably for their features, the rifles' cost put them out of reach of some shooters. To answer this, Ruger developed the 5.56mm AR-556, a direct gas impingement AR priced at an MSRP of $799.

The AR-556 gives consumers an AR that provides everything they need and nothing they don't. The semi-automatic rifle is generally configured like a military M4 Carbine (but with a 16-inch barrel) and features a collapsible six-position stock. The forged 7075-T6 upper receiver has a forward assist, shell deflector and ejection port dustcover as well as a strip of integral Picatinny rail. The rail comes equipped with a Ruger "Rapid Deploy" folding rear sight that is adjustable for windage.

MODEL: AR-556
CALIBER: 5.56 NATO/.223 Rem.
ACTION: Direct gas impingement, semi-auto
BARREL: 16 inches
OA LENGTH: 32.25-35.5 inches
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 30
WEIGHT: 6.5 pounds
STOCK: Six-position collapsible
SIGHTS: Picatinny rail, A2-style post front
FINISH: Matte black
MSRP: $799

10 Ruger Mini-14 Ranch Rifle

For stores looking for more retro tactical rifles for their shelves, the 5.56 NATO/.223 Rem. Ruger Mini-14 deserves a close look. Based roughly upon the U.S. military M14 rifle and its Garand-style tilting bolt operation, the Mini-14 Ranch Rifle in blue steel is priced at an MSRP of $999.

The heart of the Mini-14 is its fixed-piston gas system and self-cleaning, moving gas cylinder. To load the rifle, magazines are rocked in from front to back like the M14/M1A and can be released by an ambidextrous lever forward of the triggerguard. An integral scope mounting system on the receiver is designed to accept scope rings, which are included with the rifle. The rifle also comes with a strip of Picatinny rail that can be attached to the drilled-and-tapped receiver.

MODEL: Mini-14 Ranch Rifle
CALIBER: 5.56 NATO/.223 Rem.
ACTION: Fixed piston, semi-auto
BARREL: 18.5 inches
OA LENGTH: 38 inches
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 5 (higher capacity magazines available)
WEIGHT: 7 pounds
STOCK: Hardwood
SIGHTS: Adjustable rear, blade front
FINISH: Blued
MSRP: $999





SALES ADD-ON

BUSHNELL TRS-25 HI RISE



Designed for use on flattop ARs, the Bushnell TRS-25 HiRise features a riser block for keeping proper eye alignment on your favorite AR-15. Weighing in at just 6 ounces and priced at $158 MSRP, the 3 MOA red dot optic is as equally light on a rifle as it is on your customers' wallets.

Featuring 11 brightness settings and multi-coated optics, the unit is designed to be waterproof, fogproof and shock-resistant. It is powered by a CR2032 battery.

11 Sig Sauer SIGM400 SRP

Having first entered the AR market with the piston-driven SIG516 series of rifles, Sig Sauer now also offers more traditional ARs with direct gas-impingement operating systems in its M400 series. These make a great option for budget-conscious buyers who want a quality AR.

A great option to stock is the 5.56 NATO/.223 Rem. SIGM400 SRP. Priced at an MSRP of $1,054, it is the lowest-priced variant of the SIGM400 series. Packing in Sig Sauer quality with familiar AR design, the SIGM400 SRP is designed to offer buyers a great base gun ready to accept the accessories of their choice.

The sight-ready platform (SRP) AR does not come with any sights, but rather it features a flattop upper receiver and a Picatinny rail-equipped gas block for accepting the optic, or "iron sights," of the shooter's choice. The rifle sports a 16-inch barrel and six-position collapsible stock. It weighs in at just 6.3 pounds.

MODEL: SIGM400 SRP
CALIBER: 5.56 NATO/.223 Rem.
ACTION: Direct gas impingement, semi-auto
BARREL: 16 inches
OA LENGTH: 32.5-35.5 inches
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 30
WEIGHT: 6.3 pounds
STOCK: Six-position collapsible
SIGHTS: None; Picatinny rails
FINISH: Matte black
MSRP: $1,054

12 Smith & Wesson M&P15 Sport II

If you have a first-time buyer looking for a reasonably priced AR from a name they can trust, steer them toward the Smith & Wesson M&P15 Sport II. Priced at an MSRP of $739, it is an M4 Carbine-style 5.56mm/.223 Rem. that is a great base-style AR.

Featuring a traditional direct gas-impingement system of operation, the carbine features a flattop upper receiver made from 7075 T6 aluminum and features a forward assist, shell deflector and ejection port cover. The front sight is a traditional A2-style post front, while the rear sight is a Magpul folding MBUS fitted onto the receiver's rail.

The carbine sports a 16-inch barrel made of 4140 steel and a multi-position collapsible buttstock. A unique feature of the design is its forged, integral trigger guard. This price point AR from Smith & Wesson offers a lot of carbine for the money.

MODEL: M&P15 Sport II
CALIBER: 5.56 NATO/.223 Rem.
ACTION: Direct gas impingement, semi-auto
BARREL: 16 inches
OA LENGTH: 32-35 inches
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 30
WEIGHT: 6.45 pounds
STOCK: Six-position collapsible
SIGHTS: Magpul MBUS rear, winged post front
FINISH: Matte black
MSRP: $739



SIMUNITIONS AREN'T JUST FOR THE MILITARY ANYMORE

Commercial instructors can now use the force-on-force marker rounds for their clients and help make their program stand out from the crowd.

By Doug Larson

Until recently, realistic force-on-force firearms training using Simunition equipment where opponents actually shoot at each other was only available to the military and law enforcement. Now, the company is making that same equipment available to select commercial ranges and instructors.

Not much increases stress levels in humans like being shot at. When bullets are flying, especially for the first time, that level of stress can wreak havoc on a student's ability to think clearly and perform manual tasks efficiently. Law enforcement officers and war fighters learn through real-life experience that they can still perform under that kind of stress and prevail in a gunfight.

Making training as realistic as possible helps the student perform better in the real world, but actually getting shot at in training to increase stress levels would get people killed or injured. However, if the trainee could shoot at others and get shot at while avoiding the deadly consequences of using real ammunition, stress levels could be raised significantly, and the student could learn to operate a firearm more effectively.

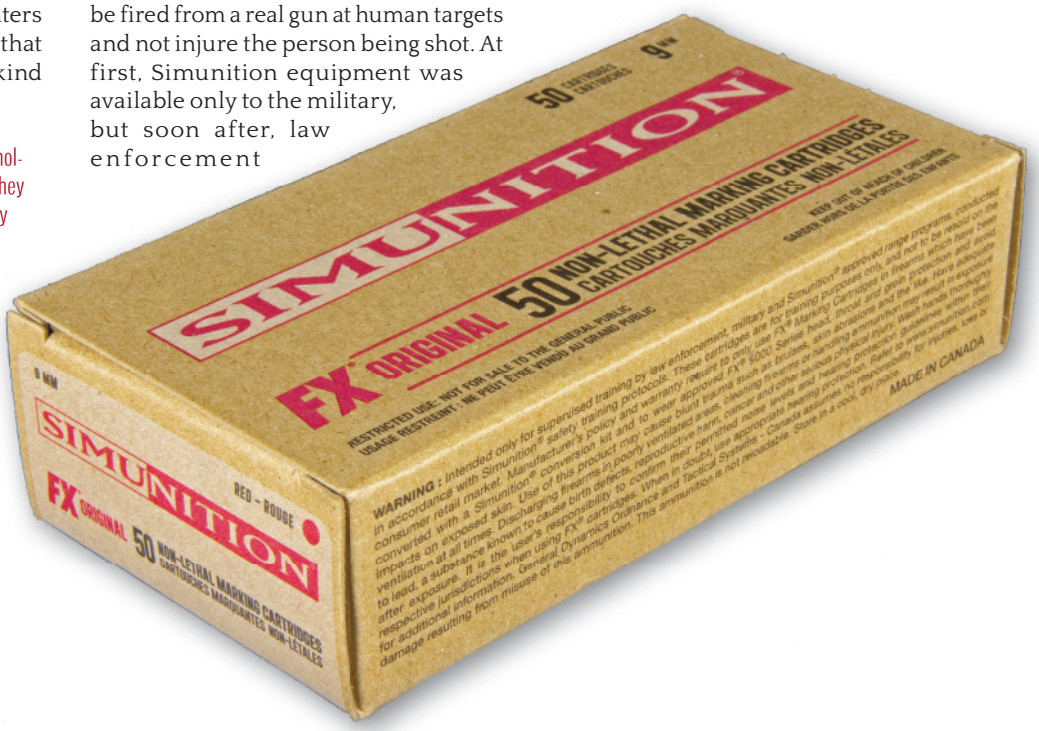
In the 1980s, General Dynamics-Ordnance and Tactical Systems Canada developed a training round that could be fired from a real gun at human targets and not injure the person being shot. At first, Simunition equipment was available only to the military, but soon after, law enforcement adopted the system. Back then, with only rare exceptions, a non-sworn civilian could not obtain training using Simunition equipment, but that has recently changed.

In order for a commercial range or instructor to obtain the materials and equipment needed to provide Simunition training to civilians, a complete vetting process is performed. This is serious equipment used by professionals, so hobbyists and those interested in recreational gun use are still barred from Simunition sales. To be certified, the trainer or range must be in business and complete a training course in the safe use of Simunition equipment. The course is available online or at various locations around the United States.

The Simunition pistol round (shown next to a 9mm hollow point round) fires a plastic marking projectile. They strike with enough force to hurt but not permanently injure properly protected students.



Simunition FX Non-Lethal Marking Cartridges are designed to be fired through real guns that have been modified with a Simunition kit. Cartridges are available for pistols, revolvers and some long guns. Available colors include white, orange, yellow, green, blue and red, depending on the caliber.





Protective equipment offered and approved by Simunition includes head and eye protection, throat protection and groin protection, all of which are mandatory when using Simunition cartridges. Vests, sleeves for the upper and lower arm, gloves and pants are also available.

SIMUNITION PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Even though Simunition cartridges are designed not to impart permanent serious injury, the pain associated with getting smacked with a marker projectile helps to induce stress in trainees. However, a plastic projectile traveling approximately 500 feet per second can still injure someone if it hits a tender, vital spot like the eyes. Because of this risk, Simunition created several items of protective equipment to be worn by shooters – three of which are mandatory.

The first is one of two styles of headgear that include eye protection and cover the sensitive and tender skin of the head. A neck protector is also required to cover the throat, and the last is a groin protector which is worn outside the clothing. Male and female models are available.

While many who train with Simunition cartridges only wear these three items in addition to their regular clothing or uniforms, Simunition offers other protective garments, including arm protectors that cover the lower half of the arm, sleeves for the upper part and shoulders, a vest, short pants and gloves.

All the equipment has been tested and approved by Simunition to withstand hits from the company's FX marking cartridges. While they do reduce the pain of a hit somewhat, they do not eliminate it all together.

Wearing all that equipment can be hot, and the more that is worn, the more restrictive the wearer's movement becomes. So, there is a trade-off between pain reduction and training in the clothing that will be worn in the real world.

Gloves can be especially cumbersome to wear if they don't fit correctly and the wearer is not used to manipulating their weapon or other equipment with them. For example, wearing ill-fitting gloves and trying to release a car's seatbelt can be difficult. Although Simunition designed the headgear to minimize restriction of vision, peripheral vision is affected.

While some may look at these equipment characteristics as negatives, others consider them positive. For if the student can learn to operate effectively with restrictions imposed by protective equipment, he can probably operate even better without it in the real world.

Only equipment specifically designed by Simunition is approved for use with Simunition cartridges. Equipment is available only to those instructors who have completed the Simunition training and are approved by the company.



The components of the conversion kit for a Colt 1911 are very similar to standard parts, but the barrel is painted blue and the ejector extends from the rear of the breech. The kit also contains a feed-ramp insert to direct the bottle-necked rounds into the chamber.

WHY USE IT?

By putting trainees in a situation where stress is higher than on the square range, opponents actually shoot back, hits hurt and students learn to better control their fear response. When they have to move, make decisions and fight back against an opponent who is doing the same thing, skills developed on the square range are put to practical use. When that is done in a safe environment during training, it's easier to put those skills into practice in the real world.

Schools offering that level of training stand out among the others as a place where a student can develop a higher skill level than is possible at places offering only square range training. If a school can do a better job of providing realistic training, it can attract more serious students who are willing to pay a greater amount for their training.

RANGE EXPENSE

The least expensive way to obtain the training needed for approval to purchase Simunition equipment and supplies and to offer Simunition force-on-force training is to take the internet-based course that costs $70 per person. Of course, the best training comes with hands-on experience, which would require attending a Simunition on-site class that costs about $200. The class schedule and locations are listed on the company's website.

It is expected that instructors receiving Simunition training already have the expertise to provide self defense shooting instruction, so the company instead concentrates on the safe use of Simunition equipment in training. Courses include information on the various Simunition cartridges available, how to convert a gun to fire Simunition cartridges, the use of protective equipment and how to design and conduct a force-on-force training scenario.

When designing a training scenario, the specific lesson to be taught must be kept in mind, and the scenario should be structured specifically to drive that point home. Shooters playing the role of aggressors can ruin a training exercise if they permit their egos to cause them to abandon their prescribed role.

According to Gunsite instructor John Hutchison, this does not mean that if the student makes a mistake that the role player should not shoot them to drive home the training point. If that happens, the student should repeat the scenario and perform it correctly so that he learns the lesson and leaves with a positive mindset.

"The role player needs to be just as committed to the student's success as the instructor and not be in competition with the student, which is one of the problems with scenario training," Hutchison said.

Getting shot with a Simunition marking round is not a pleasant experience and imparts a small amount of pain, like getting pinched, and it can leave a bruise that will be sore to the touch. But that small amount of pain – or the anticipation of it – increases the stress level, which is one of the benefits of force-on-force



While the instructor (right) observes, a student scans the area for any other aggressors. The student has shot the terrorist role player in a scenario depicting a parking lot attack. Simunition marking cartridges increase the realism of force-on-force training.

Jane Anne Shimizu photo courtesy of Gunsite

training. It helps to teach the student to operate effectively under stress and to control their fear.

Safety is of the upmost importance because the improper use of Simunition equipment could result in injury. While it can be fun, using Simunition equipment in force-on-force training is serious business and should not done for entertainment value. It is not a paintball game, and instructors should never let a training scenario turn into one.

THE NECESSARY GEAR

Converting a gun to fire Simunition cartridges is a simple and reversible process, so students can use their own guns as long as Simunition offers a conversion kit for that make and model. Once a conversion has been completed, the gun will not chamber a standard round. Instead, it will only chamber Simunition cartridges that are offered in 9mm, 5.56mm and .38 Special. Marking cartridges have a plastic projectile that is filled with a water soluble detergent-based substance that washes off clothing and surfaces.

Various colors — including white, orange, yellow, green, blue and red — are available so instructors can evaluate the effectiveness of hits on opponents from specific shooters.

Simunition offers not only marking rounds, but also a SecuriBlank line consisting of two versions — quiet and standard. These blanks are safer than a normal blank because they eliminate nearly all unburned propellant and ejected particles usually associated with blanks. Additionally, once a gun has been converted with the kit, a regular cartridge or a standard blank will not chamber.



Simunition marking cartridges can be used on paper targets; not just in force-on-force exercises. Here in the shoot house, a Gunsite student engages a paper target on a mobile stand.

Jane Anne Shimizu photo courtesy of Gunsite

For those situations when force-on-force training may be conducted in a place where leaving a mark (even if it is washable) is not wanted, Simunition offers cartridges that do not contain the marking compound. A small pain penalty is delivered when a student is hit, but a miss will not leave marking compound on surfaces.

To protect the student, Simunition offers approved protective equipment designed specifically for use with Simunition cartridges. Use of other equipment not tested or approved by Simunition is not allowed. When pressed for a ball-park figure of the minimum cost for a range to get set up to use Simunition equipment in training, the company estimated that a couple of conversion kits and two sets of protective gear would be needed, totaling $2,000 to $3,000.

Serious trainers are always looking for ways to make their instruction stand out compared to other classes. Providing force-on-force training using Simunition equipment is one way to do it. **TR**

SIMUNITION CONVERSION KITS

An advantage offered by Simunition is that students can use the same guns they carry every day. This means that once a student makes modifications to his particular carry gun, most, if not all, are retained on the training gun.

The benefit is obvious. If the student uses a gun he is not accustomed to during training, weapon manipulation skills may not be carried over into a real life and death conflict.

Simunition offers conversion kits for several different long guns and handguns, including M16/M4 variants; the HK416, the FN SCAR, the Beretta 92 and the Colt 1911, as well as some Glocks, SIGs, S&Ws and Walthers. Recently, Gunsite Academy conducted a class titled Active Shooter/Terrorist Response For Civilians where force-on-force training using Simunition equipment. For hands-on experience with Simunition equipment, the author participated and used a converted Colt Competition 1911.

Converting the stock gun was simple and straight forward. No special tools were needed and merely field stripping the gun before installing the conversion kit was all that was necessary. The kit consists of a 9mm magazine slide with three dot sights and many of the gun's internals.

The barrel is painted bright blue and has an offset bore of about .30 caliber along with a bottlenecked chamber to accept bottlenecked Simunition 9mm cartridges. The feed ramp insert is needed to facilitate feeding into the offset bore and is easily pressed in place with finger pressure.

Once installed, the gun fires Simunition 9mm marking or blank cartridges. Operation is straight blowback, so barrel lug fitting is of no concern. Disassembly and conversion back to standard consists of merely field stripping the gun, removing the feed ramp insert and reassembling with the original parts.

Although recoil when using Simunition cartridges is different than that imparted by a standard cartridge, it was surprisingly close to that of a real round.





SOMETIMES SHORTER IS BETTER

From AR-15 pistols to SBRs to a growing assortment of accessories to make them, the market for pint-sized personal defense weapons is growing.

By Max Archer

At the 2016 Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade (SHOT) Show, personal defense weapons, (PDW) were a red-hot category of immense interest by retailers and distributors.

The concept of the PDW is broadly defined as any short highly maneuverable firearm that can deliver the accuracy and firepower of a rifle. The PDW category of weapons is generally made up of AR-style pistols and short-barreled rifles, but Glock pistols with stocks and foregrips are also increasingly falling into the SBR category.

The Heckler & Koch 9mm MP5 and 4.6x30mm MP7, the 5.7x28mm FN P90 and AR-15 SBRs are some of the most popular PDW platforms, but short barreled AR-15s set up as pistols also fill the needs of the PDW concept, as long as the customer is not unlawfully shouldering it.

Even after the flurry of the SHOT Show died down, PDWs continue to be big sellers. Customers are quickly realizing that purchasing an AR-15 pistol is the same as any other handgun. Many customers are deciding to work through the six-month NFA Tax stamp SBR registration process to make their pistol into a SBR after the tax stamp is received.

The important sales point for retailers is that there is a strong surge of customers who are using all pistol formats as easy legal gateways to begin NFA SBR tax stamp registration — all while having something fun to shoot during the arduous waiting period. Other customers are going for a factory-build NFA-stamped SBR.

According tho the discussion with the ATF at the 2016 SHOT show, the "AR-15 pistol to SBR registration conversion process" represents a huge wave of sales and NFA firearm registrations in 2016 and 2017. An informal poll of dealers at the show revealed that retailers cannot keep AR15 pistols in stock.

Similarly dealers say that customers love being able to shoot the AR-15 pistol while they wait for the ATF NFA tax stamp process to complete."

The SB15 "Sig" Brace, which requires no ATF registration red tape, seemed to mature the AR-15 pistol market overnight. However, it arguably remains one of the biggest ATF ruling fiascos in recent history. With still a few states forbidding ATF regulated SBRs, the SB15 brace and





the new Sig SB-X brace serve a legal option to NFA regulated SBRs.

Beyond the giggly squeals of happy customers purchasing AR-15 pistols in droves, there were a few concerns and several strong retail trends observed over the last two years.

IS IT LEGAL?

There has been a lot of concern that if customers buy an AR15 pistol with even a partial intent to legally convert it to an NFA-regulated SBR, the buyer is somehow in the wrong.

However, some attorneys who specialize in firearms law disagree.

According to lawyer Adam Kraut of the Firearms Industry Consulting Group in Pennsylvania, the process for a customer to convert an AR-15 pistol, or other pistols on the market, into an SBR is no different than that of converting a rifle.

"While the customer waits for approval, there is nothing that would prevent them from using the pistol as a pistol," Kraut said. "It is advisable that they don't possess any parts that would allow them to convert the pistol into an SBR, such as a stock kit to avoid allegations of constructive intent. Pistols are proving to be a top choice of consumers to register as SBRs as they are frequently found in desirable barrel lengths and configurations that simply require the addition of a stock."

MANUFACTURERS RESPOND

Beyond the huge firearm names, even small companies are getting in on the PDW trend. The list of factory-built AR-15 includes LWRC, Patriot Ordnance Factory, Anderson, YHM and Primary Weapons Systems. The large OEM manufacturer Barnes Precision Machine was offering the SB15-equipped $1,300 AR-15 pistol featured here complete with free-float handguard and match-chambered barrel.

Andrew Barnes, the owner of Barnes Precision Machine, said the brace-equipped pistol has been one of his hottest models for mobile security teams and home defense.

"Customers are now realizing that a confidence-inspiring AR-15 pistol is perfect for home defense and requires no more purchasing effort than a Glock," Barnes said.

At a top-custom tier, Battle Arms Development attempted to break the internet during SHOT Show with leaked pre-show images of its tricked-out $900 custom PDW lower receiver kit.

"We decided to go all in with the most custom lower receiver PDW kit available and the sales response has been amazing," said Battle Arms Development CEO George Huang.

The Battle Arms Development PDW is dripping with its custom parts, including an integrated collapsible stock. For the retailer, it is now easy to offer quality personal defense AR-15 pistols with the huge variety now available in the marketplace.

BEYOND THE AR PISTOL

AR-15 pistols may be the most obvious product option in the PDW category, but other non-AR format guns like IWI's Uzi line, Century Arms AK pistols, CZ's 9mm Scorpion pistol and Sig Sauer's 5.56 MCX and 9mm MPX pistols are forging new territory for customers.

IWI and Century Arms are now both offering incredibly comfortable shooting models with retrofit SB15 kits to add stability. Representatives from both companies noted many customers are buying these pistol models with the intent to work through the NFA SBR process. Conversely, the Scorpion, MCX and MPX were all specifically designed to provide for easy compatibility and upgrades from a base pistol.

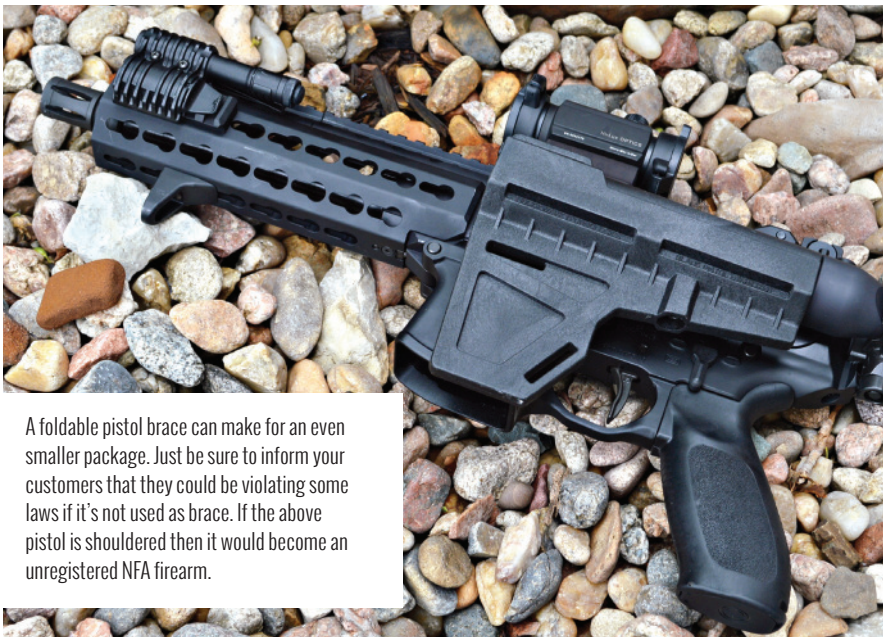
Sig Sauer's team specifically noted that the MCX and MPX line was designed to be completely user-configurable with calibers, handguards, barrels and stock or brace options with only a single hex

> The important sales point for retailers is that there is a strong surge of customers who are using all pistol formats as easy legal gateways to begin NFA SBR tax stamp registration – all while having something fun to shoot during the arduous waiting period. Other customers are going for a factory-build NFA-stamped SBR.

SOMETIMES SHORTER IS BETTER

wrench. Judging from the lines at the IWI, Century Arms, CZ and Sig Sauer booths at SHOT, any of these options would be strong considerations for retailers.

Along with the flood of pistol-classified PDWs, there was certainly a huge explosion of factory-made SBRs targeted to SOT licensed dealers of NFA firearms. This was one of the first years I noticed how many standard FFL dealers were discussing adding a SOT license to be able to sell suppressors and SBRs.



A foldable pistol brace can make for an even smaller package. Just be sure to inform your customers that they could be violating some laws if it's not used as brace. If the above pistol is shouldered then it would become an unregistered NFA firearm.

PARTS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

The main reason the AR pistol is popular for converting into an SBR or PDW is the availability of high-tech accessories. The SB15 and SB-X admittedly transformed the AR pistol market but there are also some newcomers, including the Thordsen CAA pistol builder's kit and the Shockwave Blade, providing similar pistol stabilizing functions.

The Thordsen CAA kit provides a large cheek stabilization perch. The Shockwave Blade pistol stabilizing brace provides a similar stabilization feature as the original Sig SB15, but it does so with about half the bulk and weight. The quick observation is that with several strong ATF approved pistol stabilizing devices on the market, the pistol PDW market growth is just beginning for retailers.

Some unique accessories originally developed specifically for the NFA-regulated SBR market have become heavily integrated into factory rifles and SBRs.



Write No. 013 on Reader Service Card

FAST FACTS*

3-D PRINTING

- 3-D printing does not present a public safety risk.
- Criminals won't make guns; they steal them and get them on the street
- Current laws properly govern 3-D printing of firearm facts and components

*Courtesy of NSSF

The MBV ARC collapsible stock and LAW Tactical folding stock adapter were heavily featured on tricked out SBR rifles at SHOT. The MBV ARC stock was the first extremely rugged collapsible stock to offer close to a 5-inch collapsed position that uses an existing standard sized bolt carrier.

Troy industries also was showcasing its Tomahawk collapsible stock on its own line of SBRs as well as industry partner guns that use a modified short bolt carrier. The Battle Arms Development PDW receiver kit is yet another example of a rifle which features its own integrated collapsible stock.

The $229 LAW Tactical Folding stock adapter is a unique product that allows a standard buffered AR15 tube to be folded to the side while not in use. The adapter does not allow the gun to be fired with the tube folded, but it does add a welcome 2-inch extension to the buffer tube on 7.5-inch AR pistols to increase stability. My Aero Precision 7.5-inch barreled AR pistol with a Brigand Armament carbon fiber handguard and lightweight Ballistic Advantage barrel folds to a scant 17.75 inches — easily slipping into any messenger bag or small hydration pack and is still just a handgun.

SOLID MARKET

Just a few short years ago, many regular tactical buyers likely scoffed at AR15 pistol concept, and most would have done the same about registering an NFA controlled suppressor, SBR or even machine gun. Today, owning NFA-registered items is becoming extremely widespread beyond the tactical markets, extending into sporting competitions and hunting.

The PDW market is growing both with NFA-regulated SBR rifles and large pistol formats. The AR pistol has matured beyond its "frat boy" image to a strong, viable, short-length personal defense weapon system thanks to a number of innovative products released over the last few years.

Likewise, the factory SBR market has matured along with it. Now, buyers have a good selection of new non-AR pistol and SBR options. Those innovative AR15 accessories have become the base of factory built AR15 pistols and SBR's, all of which are driving a the entire Personal Defense Weapon retail market forward for retailers. **TR**



Write No. 014 on Reader Service Card



ERATHR3 TRIES TO SHAKE UP THE MARKET ON CUSTOM 1911S

Drawing from the best in pistol training, high-end custom shops and top gun manufacturers, this new handgun maker is doing something different.

By David Bahde

The first custom 1911 I owned was tested at a Clint Smith class at Thunder Ranch in Texas. It was a team tactics class, and the pistol was a Springfield Armory customized by Bill Wilson before he created Wilson Combat.

A good friend sold it to me just for the class, and it remains one of my favorite training experiences. It began a relationship with both the 1911 pistol and Thunder Ranch that continued for years.

Even after a couple decades or more, much of my doctrine for both the 1911 and its application stem from a base provided by Clint Smith and his staff. My current custom 1911 pistols remain similar to those Clint used and had built to his standards. He was also the first person I ever saw using very high dollar 1911s during his classes no matter the conditions. The look on students' faces as he performed battlefield pickup drills in the rain with his then $6,000 hand-engraved Les Baer was both priceless and educational.

Not all custom 1911s are artwork. In fact, many remain fighting tools. My recent test of the Erathr3 1911 built by Heirloom Precision is a great example of that same philosophy.

ERATHR3

Erathr3 is not some large corporate manufacturer building firearms in the thousands. Sheri Johnson and Sterling Becklin started Erathr3 in 2013, and it remains a small operation. Leaving Noveske after nine years, Johnson is anything but new to the firearms industry. Looking to get back to the "garage days," she teamed with former Noveske president Becklin to reach this new market — one that was less interested in a tactical edge, yet still in need of high-quality products.

Meeting Johnson and Becklin served



SPECS

Manufacturer: Erathr3
Model: Customized 1911
Caliber: .45 ACP
Barrel Length: 5.0 inches
Overall Length: 8.7 inches
Width: 1.28 inches
Weight: 39 ounces
Finish: Ionbond
Sights: Custom rear / tritium front
Grips: Erathr3 Custom
Magazine Capacity: 8 rounds +1 (accepts all 1911 Full Size .45ACP magazines)
Retail Price: $8,495.00

as an introduction to some of the most fun I've had on the range in a long time. Both are engaging, friendly, enthusiastic and great to be around. Neither of them takes themselves too seriously — the makings for a great few days.

The firearms industry is clearly in need of new ideas, and these guys are pushing that envelope. Not everyone is preparing for Armageddon, the zombie apocalypse or a government collapse. Most people just want to have a good time with guns, and this event was a perfect example of that idea.

When I met with Becklin, he took me aside and shared his limited-production 1911 pistol customized by Heirloom Precision. Not only was it impressively finished, it was built for work, and Clint Smith's influence was immediately evident. Sterling asked me to put it to the test, so I obliged.

ERATHR3 1911

Jason Burton, the owner of Heirloom Precision, is one of the most highly sought after 1911 builders today. His work is renowned, which would explaining his current wait time measured in years. For many, a Burton build is the result of a lifetime of saving for a one-of-kind pistol. Each of his pistols are handcrafted to your specifications using the base gun of your choice. Such was the case with the Erathr3 1911.

As a staff instructor at Thunder Ranch, Burton has been working with Clint Smith for years. It was while working an event involving Erathr3 that this pistol was conceived. Sitting around the fire tossing ideas around resulted in a collaborative project based on Burton, Becklin and Johnson's long-time experience with Smith. The result is a limited-production pistol mirroring the specifications of Clint Smith's personal rail gun built in 2013.

Becklin starts with a Springfield Armory slide and railed frame. Hand fit, the result is a smooth action with no unnecessary movement. The front strap is high-cut and hand-checkered



The Erathr3 1911 is as accurate as you can make a 1911 outside of a purpose-built target weapon.

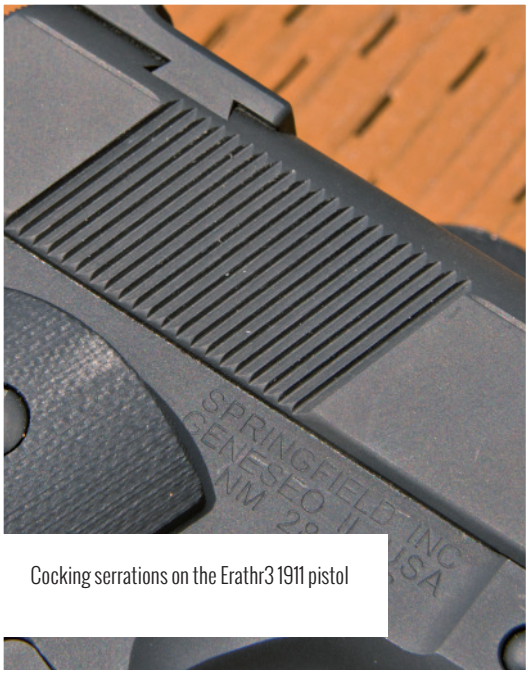


There is a strong, growing market for hand-built pistols, and the 1911 is the best platform for this kind of work in a semi-automatic.

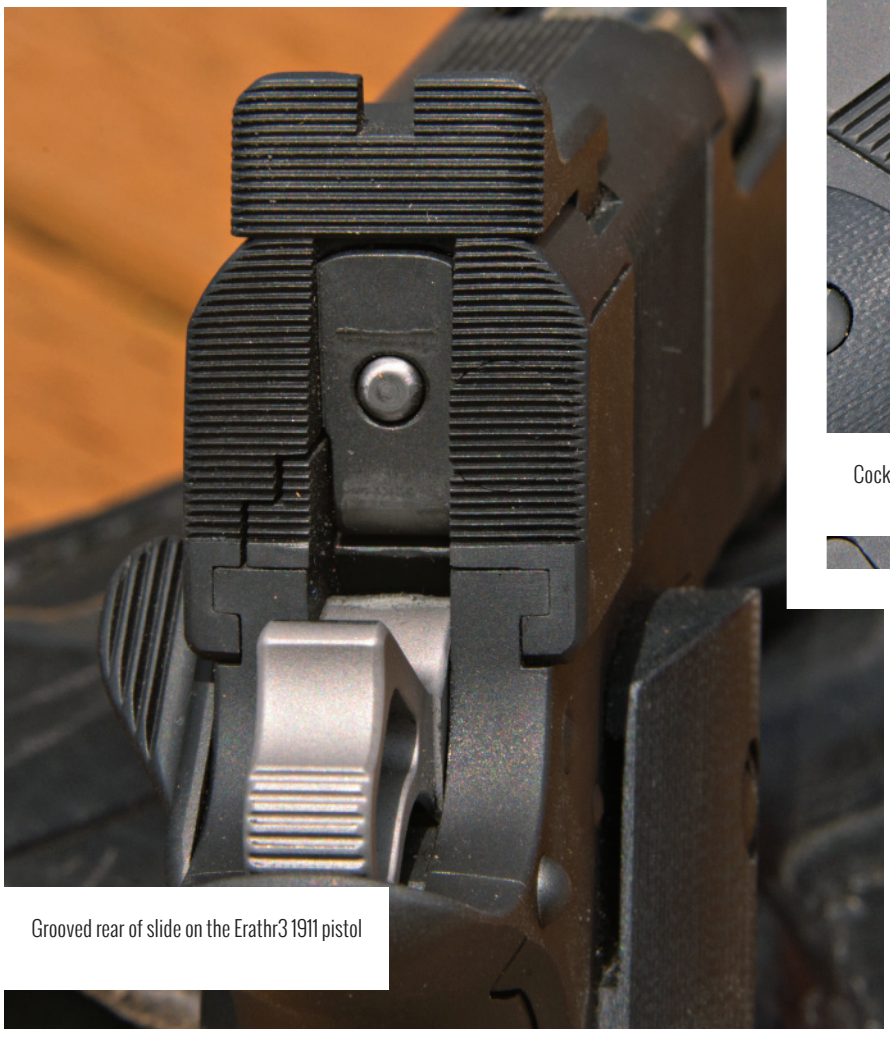
ERATHR3'S CUSTOM 1911



The Erathr3 features customized grips.



Cocking serrations on the Erathr3 1911 pistol



Grooved rear of slide on the Erathr3 1911 pistol

at 30 LPI. A matching 30 LPI mainspring housing includes a lanyard loop. Beveling the magwell insures positive magazine exchanges while the extended beavertail safety insures a solid grip.

A Colt Commercial style thumb safety sits on the strong side. The short length solid aluminum trigger breaks cleanly and precisely at four pounds. Everything on the frame is smooth, evenly matched and hand-formed for a perfect fit. Internals are tool steel and expertly tuned.

The top of the slide is flattened and



The Erathr3 1911 pistol also features a skeletonized hammer.

PERFORMANCE TESTING

Speer Gold Dot	230 grains	915 FPS	1.50"
Hornady HAP (steel)	230 grains	877 FPS	1.48"
Winchester Ranger SXT	230 grains	900 FPS	1.38"
Federal HST Tactical	230 grains	894 FPS	1.15"

Bullet weight is measured in grains, and velocity is measured in feet per second (fps)by Pro Chrony Digital chronograph. Accuracy in inches for 5 shot groups at 25 yards.

The top of the slide is flattened and serrated. It incorporates a Kart National Match .45 ACP barrel using a standard barrel bushing and guide rod. Serrations cover the rear of the slide, including the extractor.

Perfectly matched, the extractor all but disappears into the slide. Serrations on the slide stop use a three-point curved arrow pattern facilitating solid operation and a subtle but striking look. Sharp edges are removed and each part is expertly contoured for a completely smooth pistol.

French bordering the top of the slide adds to the sleek and custom look. The front sight is matched and pinned to the slide and uses a tritium insert and serrations. The rear is modified for one-handed operations, serrated and black only with a square notch. The entire pistol is coated in Ionbond — perhaps the most durable and longest-lasting gun finish available today.

TESTING

In keeping with Smith's philosophy and Becklin's request, this pistol was checked for function with Federal 230 grain HST ammunition and placed in my Milt Sparks Nexus holster for everyday carry. Used while testing other guns, it was fired every time I hit the range for several days. It remained my primary EDC handgun for a trip to Gunsite to work a 250 pistol class as well as a media event at the JL Bar Ranch in Texas. It only made it back into the safe after final testing using some of Browning's new BPT ammunition.

RANGE RESULTS

Accuracy with this pistol was excellent, cutting one large hole from off hand at 7 yards. It opened up to a cluster performing the same drills at 10 and 15 yards. Moving to 25 yards using the FJ as a rest, it fired the 230 grain Federal HSTs into a tad over an inch. It was no less accurate with anything else for that matter. You expect that from a hand-built 1911, but it's not always the case. This pistol is as accurate as you can make a 1911 outside of a purpose-built target weapon.

Function was flawless with both the personal defense and practice ammunition. Used as a secondary weapon during some rifle tests, it worked well using one hand along with some less than conventional positions. Working from the FJ, it was smooth to the draw and easy to maneuver around the truck. It inserted easily and drew smoothly from the Milt Sparks Nexus. This IWB holster holds my personal carry piece, has for years and the Erathr3 1911 felt right at home.

Becklin asked me to "rough it up," so I tried, at least as much as I am willing to rough up $8,500 pistol. Ionbond DLC is incredibly hard and durable, so Kydex (even during dusty and dirty days) did not seem to phase it. After completing all of the testing, it cleaned up like new.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Custom 1911s are certainly not for everyone, especially limited editions like the Erathr3. Most are not going to have $8,500 to spend on a pistol, but many do. All but two of these are pre-sold,and the word has barely made it out.

Despite what many may say, there is a strong and growing market for hand-built pistols, and the 1911 remains the best platform for this kind of work in a semi-auto. Wait times for most well-known Smiths is at least a year and can be as long as three.

Eratrh3's 1911 is expertly built, but remains a usable and practical fighting handgun. Everything about it fits into a philosophy revolving around use not storage. I can picture Clint Smith, or Sterling Becklin working this pistol hard in the rain, sun, snow or any other condition.

Erathr3 is a young company with new ideas that has tapped into the up-and-coming gun culture. At the same time, they have the insight to listen to icons in the training industry like Smith and others. It's all about innovation with a focus on the ability to use what they build. If this 1911 is any indication that they are on the right track, so make sure you give them a solid look. **TR**



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THE CAGE (pages 12-18)

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Mossberg, MMR Carbine Rifle 103
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CAA, AK Magazine 105
Grand Power, K22 X-Trim Competitive .22LR Pistol 106
Milwaukee Tool, Hardline Pocket Knives 107
Grey Ghost Gear, The Wanderer Messenger-style Bag 108
CMMG, MKW Anvil in .458 SOCOM 109
5.11 Tactical, Rush LBD XRAY Tactical Carryall Bag 110
Bushnell, Trophy Xtreme 2.5-10X 44mm Scope 111
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THE COMING FIREARMS PANIC-BUY OF 2016

By Eric Graves

While it hasn't gone into full "Macy's basement sale" mode yet, the latest round of panic-buying of firearms has commenced as we move into the final phase of the 2016 election cycle.

Kicked off by the recent slaying of 49 people and the wounding of another 53 at the hands of an American-born terrorist who pledged allegiance to ISIS in a Florida nightclub, the anti-gun movement wasted no time in calling for legislation that would curtail civil rights and outlaw certain types of firearms and accessories. President Obama went so far as to call for the reintroduction of the so-called Assault Weapons Ban that this nation suffered from 1994 until 2004. Many believe that the presumptive Democratic presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton, for the office also shares this goal.

It looks like a rough year for gun owners.

While the mainstream media likes to call this class of firearms "assault weapons," I refer to them by the term we use in industry — modern sporting rifles. It's an important distinction because the former is used to vilify the gun to make it easier to ban, while the latter describes how they are seen by those who actually own and use them.

Legislation targeting these types of firearms is broad sweeping and includes many types, but most buyers will concentrate in the AR-15 or one of its clones due to the gun's popularity and availability of parts for customization. So, unless you are a specialist retailer, keep this in mind.

As of writing this article in June, the run so far has been on weapons that would be regulated under a new version of the Assault Weapons Ban in addition to magazines and ammunition for those firearms. Some customers are purchasing in bulk, including speculators who hope to cash in on short supply and rising prices as we saw in earlier panics.

However, many are concentrating on lower receivers for AR-15-style rifles as they are inexpensive and considered by the BATFE to be a firearm because they bear the serial number. These can be built into full firearms later. Other buyers are just trying to get ahead of the crowd, preparing for the threat of future firearms prohibitions.

There's no full-on panic yet, but we're seeing a slow build toward it, and I expect it to continue at least through January 2017 when we'll see the inauguration of a new president. It will become an issue as consumers fear shortages and make purchases, which further contribute to bare shelves.

During this period, the tactical outfitter may notice periods of lulls in sales as consumers concentrate on purchasing firearms, magazines and ammunition. However, once those stocks are depleted, many will turn to other items such as firearms accessories, prepper supplies, medical items, clothing and individual equipment. There are customers who already have the firearms they want, but will want to stock up on both magazines and ammunition as stocks dwindle.

Many tactical stores sell weapon accessories, including magazines. Since so-called "high-capacity" magazines were banned under the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, they are desirable since they are an inexpensive investment for the future. While all magazines aren't equal in terms of quality, they all sell during a panic. The savvy consumer will seek out quality and be willing to pay a premium for it.

Magazines are a particular area of concern. Everyone will want them in capacities from 20 to 100 rounds. Another federal restriction of civilian use of magazines with a capacity in excess of 10 rounds means that what is out on the market is all there is. In 1986, when the ATF closed the Machine Gun Registry, we didn't know what forever meant, and Second Amendment advocates weren't as organized as they are today. But 30 years on, we have begun to comprehend the concept of forever and don't want to be without feeding devices for our firearms.

Over the past 20 years, several states have local- or state-level restrictions on magazines. These rules have been dealt with in various ways, one of which is the use of repair parts. Many magazine manufacturers offer various repair parts for magazines. These include, bodies, floor plates, magazines and followers. Naturally, one could assemble all of the repair parts into a working magazine.

There are also many accessories on the market which modify existing magazines. These include new floor plates, which make it easier to grasp the magazine, while other floor plate replacements increase the magazine's capacity. These items generally also include a replacement spring. There are even modification kits which combine two magazines end-to-end to increase capacity so that three-gun competitors won't lose time changing magazines.

Earlier, I mentioned that many would purchase lower receivers. During panics, they have tended to go up in price as much as 500 percent in a matter of months as supplies for complete rifles dry up, but they're of no use until they're built up into a full configuration.

Still, others will buy a firearm just to have one, intent on customizing it after the purchase. These are both opportunities.

Parts — particularly those items referred to as "furniture" like handguards, pistol grips and stocks — will be increasingly in demand. This also offers ample opportunity to cross-sell slings, cleaning kits and storage bags. In many cases, MSR owners will also procure optics, mounts and back up sights.

As shooters become more experienced they will look for load-carrying equipment and range-appropriate clothing to support their hobby.

Panic-buying of firearms is understandably created by the fear of new firearms restrictions. While such conditions are frustrating for merchants who cannot offer the most sought-after items, there are other opportunities to be had.

With every new firearm purchased at your establishment or somewhere else, there is an opportunity created to sell a wide variety of accessories. **TR**

Eric Graves is the editor of the leading tactical-equipment blog Soldier Systems Daily and is a former Air Force officer.

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