

# SSG

*Thompson shoots the SSG08 prone using the Versapod behind available cover.*



inches. An adjustable cheek piece and butt plate as well as a monopod allow the stock to be configured to comfortably fit each shooter.

As with previous Steyr precision rifles, the match-quality barrel is cold hammer-forged, plus it has a Man-nox coating to prevent rust. Although, I have not generally found a muzzle brake necessary on .308 rifles, the SSG08 has one, and I did find when shooting prone it helps prevent dust kicking up to identify a tactical marksman's position. A Versapod bipod is included and is a real aid to shooting prone or off a rest. Although I often mount the bipod on tactical rifles to fold forward to allow enough room on the fore-end to fire offhand, the Versapod on the SSG08 is designed to be mounted in the rear folding position. Enough room is left on the fore-end, however, to allow comfortable offhand usage. Hardware is included for alternate mounting on the fore-end if so desired. The top Picatinny rail allows mounting a



*Thompson uses the Versapod while getting into shooting position behind the SSG08 on an up incline. Because of the white circles on the NightForce lens caps Thompson would remove them if actually shooting from a camouflaged position.*

wide variety of scopes and/or night vision devices. Additionally, side rails allow the mounting of pointers or illuminators.

Ergonomics are very good. The pistol grip is extremely comfortable and may be configured for larger or smaller hands by switching out its front or back strap. Magazines are the same well-designed ones used on the SSG04 and on the Tactical Scout. I have found them to be tough and to feed reliably. In .308, these magazines hold 10 rounds and in .300 Winchester Magnum eight rounds. By the way, the SSG08 is available in .243, .308 and .300 Winchester Magnum. Three mounting points for sling swivels allow the use of a variety of slings.

The SSG08's safety is the same as that of the SSG04 and Tactical Scout. It is at the top of the receiver and rolls forward to put in on safe (in which the bolt may be operated but the trigger is locked) or locked (in which the bolt is locked and a button must be depressed to move the safety). When the safety is rolled all the way to the rear, the SSG08 is ready to fire. A white dot shows



# SSG



*The SSG08's stock allows adjustment for cheek rest and butt pad and incorporates an easy to operate monopod that is released by the lever just above it.*



*A scale allows the cheek piece to be quickly returned to the chosen shooting position.*



*The fore-end on the SSG08 incorporates side rails for pointers or illuminators.*

when safe and a red one when the safety is off. I have found some sliding safeties atop the receivers of sniping rifles difficult to operate smoothly prior to a shot, but the one on the SSG08 is very smooth. Steyr SSGs have always been known for their excellent triggers. With a trigger that comes from the factory set at 2 pounds, the SSG08 is no exception.

The SSG08's SBS (Safe Bolt System) is designed to be very safe, to the extent that Steyr has test fired rifles using full-power loads with a bullet lodged in the barrel. Six beefy front locking lugs assure that the bolt locks securely. Grooves are machined into the bolt to allow ice, mud or residue to be pushed clear of the bolt to ensure reliability. The bolt handle's knob is large enough to allow fast, sure operation for follow-up shots.

I decided when I got the SSG08 in that I wanted to test it with a NightForce scope. NightForce scopes have an excellent reputation for precision and durability in the military and law enforcement communities, and I felt an NF would let me maximize the SSG08. One criterion I had was a scope that was as light and compact as possible while giving performance capability to at least 800 yards or more. The one I chose was NightForce's NXS 2.5-10x32 with a MILDOT reticle. I'm used to MILDOT reticles and, though I normally use a Leupold laser range-finder, like to have them available for range estimation if needed. All of the NightForce scopes I use have illuminated reticles, as does the NXS 2.5-10x32. This NF is 12 inches in

overall length and 19 ounces in weight, not bad at all for a scope with its features. Windage and elevation adjustments are .25 inch at 100 yards. Let me emphasize here that NightForce scopes use titanium springs that ensure precision tracking when making adjustments. My experience with NF scopes has been

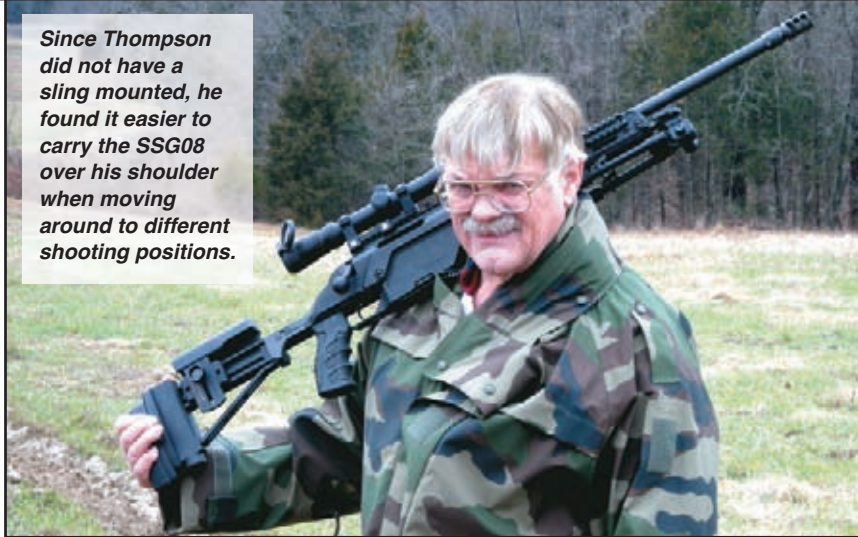
that if I am 1.5 inches off at 200 yards when zeroing, then 3 clicks (half what it would be at 100 yards) will get me on. On a tactical scope where elevation or windage adjustments must be made precisely to place a shot in a tactical situation, this is critical. I like NF's Unimount and used it with the SSG08.



*Thompson found that it took a lot of arm strength to hold the SSG08 on target when attempting to shoot offhand.*



*Since Thompson did not have a sling mounted, he found it easier to carry the SSG08 over his shoulder when moving around to different shooting positions.*



I generally zero .308 scopes with .308 168-grain Match ammo. For the SSG08, I took along Black Hills 168-grain BTHP and Federal 168-grain BTHP. After shooting the SSG08 at 50 yards to get it close to on, I zeroed it for 200 yards with the Black Hills load since I had brought one more box of it along to the range. The Federal was close to "on" as well. I have



*The SSG08's muzzle brake is not really as necessary on a .308 tactical rifle as on some heavier calibers, but it does help deflect gases so they don't kick up as much dust. Some snipers will remove the flash suppressor and install a suppressor.*



*Views of the SSG08's safety/selector in the "fire" position (red dot) and "safe" (close-up—white dot). The comfortable pistol grip may be fitted to the hand by changing the front or back strap.*

A large advertisement for the Blackhawk! Knox Axiom Ultra-Light Rifle Stock. The main image shows the rifle stock mounted on a tripod, with a scope and a long barrel. The text "Buy It For Recoil Reduction. Confidence and Accuracy Included At No Extra Cost" is prominently displayed. Below this, a paragraph describes the stock's features: "BLACKHAWK!® presents the award-winning Knox Axiom Ultra-Light® Rifle Stock. This lightweight stock utilizes dual recoil systems to dramatically reduce painful felt recoil by up to 85% allowing for improved shooter comfort and faster target reacquisition. Adjustable to fit any sized shooter, the Axiom UL will draw out a rifle's full accuracy potential giving you the confidence to perform at the highest level." It also includes the website "www.BLACKHAWK.com" and the phrase "MADE IN THE USA". At the bottom, it says "FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR COMPLETE LINE OF STOCKS AND A DEALER NEAR YOU, CALL 800.694.5263". The Blackhawk! logo and an ISO 9001 certification logo are also present.



*The National Tactical Invitational (NTI) is an excellent proving ground for guns and tactics. This year Dr. Topper's primary sidearm was a Colt New Agent .45. Here he participates in one of several skills drills. This one requires the participant to draw and fire three shots on the move from a retention position on three targets in three seconds from the 1-yard line.*



# Colt's New Agent and the National Tactical

**M**emorial Day weekend is a time to honor our veterans and it's also a time when most Americans plan backyard barbecues, visit local parks or head for the beach. But for the members of the American Tactical Shooting Association the approach of Memorial Day also means that its time to make final preparations for the National Tactical Invitational. The NTI is a very unusual shooting event because it is not a shooting contest. Instead, the NTI is a workshop where the NTI staff and participants test their gun handling skills, tactics and equipment in a variety of simulated tacti-



*Colt factory magazines for "officer-size" .45s have a special follower that acts like a leaf spring and allows the magazine to hold seven rounds instead of the usual six.*

cal environments that include live-fire shoot houses, a tactical skills drill and force-on-force exercises. On the other hand, the NTI isn't only about tactics and shooting. Every year there



*The New Agent's ejection port is ported and flared to enhance ejection. This is a very important feature in a 3-inch semi-auto that has limited slide travel.*

are a number of thought-provoking presentations. These have included a variety of topics ranging from how to survive terrorist attacks and natural disasters to discussions of the latest

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY DR. MARTIN D. TOPPER



*Dr. Topper used this like-new Colt New Agent he had recently purchased as his primary sidearm at the NTI. This pistol has no sharp edges that can irritate skin, abrade clothing or snag during a draw. It also came with discontinued Colt simulated ivory grips that truly enhance its looks.*

## How This Mini-.45 Fared at This Demanding Event

# Invitational

guns, gear and training techniques. But, most of all, the NTI offers a chance to meet people with a broad range of firearms and tactics-related expertise and share information.

### NTI XX

Every year it seems like the NTI staff comes up with a tougher set of problems to solve. This year's event was the NTI's 20th anniversary, and the staff seemed to have made an extra effort to create scenarios that are complex and difficult to solve. As usual, the themes of the scenarios were taken from events in everyday life, with the shoot houses and force-on-force exercises presenting varia-



*The Track Sight on Dr. Topper's New Agent proved to be less than precise when shooting at close range during the NTI. All hits were on the torso, but without raised sights center core hits proved somewhat elusive when "pie-ing" corners.*



*The New Agent has a lightweight long trigger that makes this pistol fit well in the author's hand. In addition, the magazine release has a nicely checkered non-slip surface.*



*The author used this Rusty Sherrick holster and dual-pouch magazine holster. Both concealed well under his Concealed Carry Clothiers vest, and held the pistol and magazines securely.*



*Dr. Topper's backup gun was a Crimson Trace laser-equipped Ruger LCR loaded with Cor-Bon ammunition. It cleanly knocked the target down with one shot each time it was used.*

tions on the chosen themes. For example, two of the force-on-force exercises and one shoot house presented shopping mall scenarios. One of the force-on-force mall exercises involved a straightforward robbery by two men. The other force-on-force mall exercise and one of the shoot houses involved a hostage rescue scenario. If you've never thought about how complex a rescue could be in a mall, this set of exercises really brought it home. The multitude of



# NTI

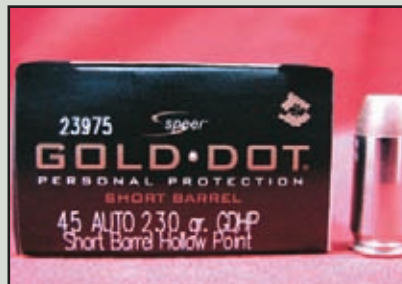


*Dr. Topper's NTI gear included a Colt New Agent .45, a back-up Crimson Trace Laser-equipped Ruger LCR .38 Special revolver, a cell phone, two spare seven-shot Colt magazines, a Benchmade folding Mini-Stryker knife, a can of Fox OC spray and an Insight-Tech Gear Typhoon flashlight. When distributed about the body, this equipment balances well and carries easily for long periods.*



*Dr. Topper used standard-pressure Black Hills and Federal American 230-grain FMJ ammunition at the NTI. Recoil was quite controllable, despite the New Agent's 24-ounce weight and the small size of the New Agent's grip.*

storefronts and support columns in a mall offer a lot of cover. Unfortunately, it quickly becomes apparent that all this cover is equally available to both you and the hostage-takers. Another set of scenarios dealt with the problems that can occur at weddings when unrequited lovers get involved.



*Speer's 230-grain Gold Dot Short Barrel ammunition has a deep cylindrical hollowpoint that's designed to expand at the lower velocities produced by short-barreled .45s. It also uses a low-flash propellant that produces minimal muzzle signature in low light.*

Normally those who've been jilted sulk off in anger and disappointment. But what do you do when one shows up wearing a bomb vest or brings several armed friends to steal the bride? Seem a bit far-fetched? Maybe. But how many mass shootings have occurred in churches over the past 10

years? They're rare events, but they do happen.

The presentations were equally interesting. They included a session about how to use alertness to spot potential trouble as you go about your daily business, a discussion of practical ways to protect yourself in the event that you're ever in an area where a chemical or biological agent has been released, a presentation on the evolution of modern training, a talk about how to select defensive



*Speer's 185-grain Gold Dot .45 load (left) has a wider hollow point than the 230-grain Short Barrel Gold Dot (right). But the hollow point of the Short Barrel load has a larger volume and is designed to expand fully at velocities around 800 fps.*



*Speer's 185-grain Gold Dot load (left) and Winchester's 230-grain PDX Bonded hollow point (right) both fed smoothly in reliability tests of the New Agent*



*Dr. Topper used Cor-Bon's 147-grain .38 Special FMJ load in his Crimson Trace laser-equipped back-up Ruger LCR. This load produced "one-shot stops" on Teddy Tactical targets both times it was used.*



*It takes more than 30 judges, role players and administrative staff to build and operate the scenarios for the NTI's 12 stages.*



*Well-known pistolsmith Jim Garthwaite is an ATSA member who helps run the NTI each year. He examined Dr. Topper's New Agent and made a number of suggestions concerning customization.*

designs, and Tim Wegner of Blade-Tech brought some of his latest knives. Given all of this, participants and staff alike had very little down time.

### **GUN TEST**

Because it's a workshop, people often come to the NTI to test specific skills and equipment. I've tested a number of guns at the NTI, and this year was no different. Several weeks before the NTI I was at the Florida Gun Exchange when a like-new Colt New Agent .45 with simulated ivory grips was traded in. It was small and easy to conceal, and it looked really nice. The gun appeared to be very well-made, the safeties all worked, and there were no signs of abuse by the previous owner. A close examination of the New Agent in the store indicated that it could not have had more than 100 rounds put through it



*This Teddy Tactical 3-D target pops out into the window. It has a central core made of PVC pipe with stone that must be hit squarely for the target to drop and be "neutralized."*

before its owner sold it for a Glock 36. Even though it was a very nice gun, I wasn't sure that the New Agent would be a good general carry gun to replace my Glock 30. The latter had proved to be difficult to conceal in hot weather, and I decided to trade it off in late spring.

There were several reasons for my concerns about the Colt. The first was that I'd heard a number of people question the reliability of 1911s with barrels less than 3 1/2 inches. While at the NTI I asked Jim Garthwaite about this. Jim is a highly respected pistolsmith who specializes in working the 1911s and Browning Hi-Powers. Jim told me that the shorter, lighter slides of 3-inch 1911s have a very short cycle. Because of this, these short-barreled semi-autos don't have a great deal of "dwell time" when the slide goes fully to the rear after firing. For this reason, short-barreled 1911s

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# NTI



**Multiple targets can make traversing hallways difficult to do during NTI scenarios. Dr. Topper shoots a target that pops out of the doorway while a second suspended target moves in toward him. Care must be taken not to shoot through the suspended target and hit the simulated bystander in the red dress behind it.**

at the NTI I asked Jim Garthwaite about this. Jim is a highly respected pistolsmith who specializes in working the 1911s and Browning Hi-Powers. Jim told me that the shorter, lighter slides of 3-inch 1911s have a very short cycle. Because of this, these short-barreled semi-autos don't have a great deal of "dwell time" when the slide goes fully to the rear after firing. For this reason, short-barreled 1911s need to have strong recoil springs, and their magazines also need to have strong springs to quickly raise the next round up for feeding. Sure enough, the New Agent had one failure to feed during a shoot house exercise. In this particular instance, the magazine failed to elevate the round fast enough and the result was that the round being fed wound up sitting bullet-up in the ejection port. Unfortunately, this was one of the two shoot houses in which my weak hand was placed in a mitten and my weak arm was in a sling. When the jam occurred, I quickly found that there is no place on the New Agent's slide that can easily be used as a support for one-hand slide manipulation. I would have been completely out of the fight had I not been carrying a backup Ruger LCR equipped with a Crimson Trace laser sight. When the Colt jammed, I simply holstered the jammed pistol and drew the Ruger from the pocket of my Concealed

Carry Clothiers vest. Then I dropped the target with one well-placed Cor-Bon 147-grain .38 Special JRN bullet. This was the only stoppage I've had with the Colt using either hollowpoint or ball ammo, and it just happened to occur at the worst possible moment. All I can say is that all semi-autos experience occasional stoppages, and when they do, a backup gun can be a lifesaver.

The next question I had about the Colt involved shootability. There were really two issues here: recoil and sighting. Given that the short-handled New Agent weighed 24 ounces and had smooth simulated ivory grips, I expected that the gun might twist in my hand under recoil, but I found that I had no problems in this area. On the way home I stopped in Northern Virginia and let some friends shoot the New Agent at the Fairfax Rod and Gun Club in Manassas. They said that that it had fairly stiff recoil, which is something I really hadn't noticed. In fact I had no problems staying within the stringent time lim-



**Dr. Topper engages a gunman who popped into a window as he moves to rescue a relative in an urgent-care scenario.**



**The "mystery gun" stage involved using an unfamiliar shotgun to prevent the kidnapping of a daughter on her wedding day. This stage is shot in very low light, using just a cheap lantern for light, rather than a more efficient tactical flashlight.**



**Participants in the ATSA Village force-on-force scenarios are given snub-nose revolvers and ten rounds of Simmunition, which must last them throughout all four scenarios in the village. Participants do their best to avoid having to use their guns.**

its on the NTI skills drill while shooting the New Agent. This is probably because the gun has an excellent 5.5-pound trigger. It may also be because I've become so accustomed to recoil over the years that I've learned to work around it. As for sighting, the New Agent does not have raised front and rear sights. Instead, it has a sight track groove on top of the slide that reminds me of the "guttersnipe" sight sometimes found on small, concealable semi-autos throughout the 20th Century. I first thought that this sight would make close range shots fast and accurate and long-range shots extremely difficult, but the opposite proved to be true. It was difficult to get precise center torso hits when the New Agent was held in a retention or semi-retention position while "pie-ing" corners. Fast hits somewhere on the torso were easy and none of my close-range shots missed, but it was hard to precisely index the muzzle without a front sight. The 3-D Teddy Tactical targets used at the NTI have a core of 4-inch PVC pipe filled with stones that must be hit if the target is to be dropped. The trench sight was just not precise enough to consistently hit dead-center when the gun

*continued on page 88*



# COR-BON'S SIZZLING DPX AND HUNTER AMMO

**These Top-Flight Cartridges Deliver  
Knockdown Power at Warp Speeds**

BY DAVE WORKMAN



*Cor-Bon loads some of the hottest commercial ammunition on the market, and author Dave Workman found plenty to like in this exclusive evaluation.*



*The author cuts loose with his Colt Python, one of several firearms he used during a test of two types of Cor-Bon .357 Magnum ammunition.*

Several years ago during an industry gathering at the Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade Show in Las Vegas, my longtime pal Massad Ayoob introduced me to Peter Pi, founder of an ammunition company called Cor-Bon and after an interesting chat, Pi promised to send a sample of his product for my evaluation. What arrived about two weeks later were 100 rounds of the hottest and most delightfully accurate .38 Special ammunition I've ever seen from a commercial producer. In those days, Cor-Bon produced this stuff as "+P+," and it was not the kind of round I would recommend for a typical .38 Special revolver. I ran it through a couple of Model 19 Smith & Wesson revolvers chambered for .357 Magnum, and when I checked the muzzle velocity, it really got my attention. I saved a couple of 20-round boxes of that stuff, which was loaded with two different bullet weights, a 158-grain lead semi-wadcutter hollowpoint or a 110-grain jacketed hollowpoint.

Jump ahead to the present and while casually going through some





**Not bad for first six rounds out of the box without a sight adjustment. This 25-yard target shows that Cor-Bon can put game in the pot or stop an attack.**

press materials after the 2010 SHOT Show, I ran across something called DPX (which uses the Barnes all-copper X-bullet; the “DPX” designation stands for “Deep Penetrating X-Bullet”), which was manufactured by Cor-Bon, and that aroused my curiosity. Could this stuff be as potent as the old .38 Special ammunition I’d tried out? I contacted Cor-Bon, and soon there arrived a selection of cartridges in .357 Magnum, .41 Magnum and .45 ACP. In addition, there were a couple of boxes each of the Hunter rifle ammunition, in .308 Winchester and .30-06 Springfield.

Cor-Bon prominently prints the average muzzle velocity of each caliber on the box, and for the record, many times I got far better velocities out of my particular guns. That impressed the dickens out of me. As anticipated, my recorded velocities from guns with shorter barrels—a Smith & Wesson Model 19 with a 2 1/2-inch barrel and a Detonics Combat Master with a 3 1/2-inch barrel—produced slightly slower velocities.

End of story? Oh, not hardly. There is much more to Cor-Bon than just a ballistics comparison. To get the lowdown on Cor-Bon, this writer not

only spent time at the range, I went right to the source for a lengthy chat with Peter Pi, who explained not only how this new DPX ammunition gets its spunk, but also talked about the importance of selecting the right components to make that happen.



**Workman's evaluation also involved shooting offhand without benefit of a rest, and this time the target was a tin can at 25 yards, which he consistently hit with round after round. That can is smaller than a rabbit, proving that when Workman goes afield the bunnies are in trouble!**

Pi named his company Cor-Bon because he used bonded-core bullets in the ammunition, and he simply reversed the abbreviations. The company was founded in 1982 after Pi had started handloading to feed his own shooting habits—he had recently graduated from the police academy—and soon he was providing ammunition to friends. His story is like so many others in the firearms industry. What began as a hobby became a small business that became a big business. “The next thing I knew,” he recalled, “the local police department wanted to adopt my ammunition.”

From there, Cor-Bon took off and never looked back. What Pi did that others were not doing was to push his ammunition to the edge for the greatest velocities within safe pressure limits, and that took a great deal of experimentation with projectiles and propellants. “The load that really put us on the map,” he said, “was the 9mm 115-grain load at 1,350 fps.” That certainly got everyone’s attention during the 9mm craze 25 years ago, and Cor-Bon built on that reputation rather than resting on its laurels.





## COR-BON



*The author's Smith & Wesson Model 19, shown with a brand new set of Herrett's stocks, played a key role in the ammo evaluation.*



*Wearing the older Pachmayr grips, Workman's Model 19 shot low and to the right, but that's a problem easily solved by a sight adjustment. This is an offhand 25-yard group.*

Pi tested ammunition in several different guns, established velocity averages that he prints on the side of each box and is not surprised when customers discover that they get better ballistics than advertised. For example, I tried the DPX 125-grain load in .357 Magnum, advertised at 1,300 fps. Out of my Colt Python with a 6-inch barrel, I recorded a top velocity of 1,396 fps with my chronograph set 3 feet ahead of the muzzle, and the average was 1,383 fps. Now that's good, and it is the kind of energy one wants out of a .357 Magnum, with its associated muzzle energy exceeding the 469 foot pounds printed on the box.

Shifting to my classic 2 1/2-inch Model 19 Smith & Wesson with a round butt, the 125-grain pills hit a top speed of 1,267 fps, which makes sense due to the shorter barrel and an average of 1,249 fps. Still, nothing with two or four legs wants to be on the receiving end of that load.

Changing over to Cor-Bon's 180-grain JSP Hunter load, the Python put them out at 1,110 fps, down from the printed 1,200 fps but still with plenty of punch, while out of my Model 19, that round streaked out of the bore at 1,041 fps average with a high velocity of 1,048 fps. I know a now-retired game warden who once dropped a crippled cow elk using the same model gun, and I would not hesitate to use that gun and load combination in a pinch against black bear. This is a revolver I frequently carry in the rugged terrain of Washington's Cascades, and I'll be taking some of this ammunition along on the trail.

The most pleasant surprise I got was with the .41 Magnum loads out of two different Ruger Blackhawks, one with a 4 5/8-inch barrel and the other with a 6 1/2-inch tube. Trust me on this: Anyone looking to anchor a buck, bull or bear with the .41 Magnum ought to give this DPX ammunition serious consideration!

Out of the shorter barrel, the 180-grain DPX load clocked 1,364 fps with a high of 1,371 fps, when the advertised velocity is 1,300 fps. This occurred consistently. Shifting to the





**Workman's test battery included (clockwise) the Model 19 snubby, his 6-inch Python, a trio of .45 autos including a Detonics Combat Master, Kimber Custom Compact and Springfield Government Model, and a pair of Ruger Blackhawks in .41 Magnum.**



**The author found that his full-size Springfield delivered the goods in terms of accuracy and velocity, sending 185-grain DPX rounds downrange at 1,066 fps average.**

longer barreled handgun, that same load sizzled across the screens at a top speed of 1,430 fps with an average velocity of 1,418 fps, better than 100 fps faster than advertised. Imagine that all-copper projectile slamming into a whitetail or mule deer at 50 to 75 yards. That translates to venison in the cooler.

My daily carry gun is a .45 ACP Model 1911 in one configuration or another. Using the 185-grain DPX in a 4-inch Kimber, I recorded an average velocity of 1,007 fps with a high of 1,032 fps. The Detonics sent loads across the screens at 985.6 fps and out of my Government Model Springfield, that same bullet cruised along at 1,066 fps with a high of 1,086 fps. The printed average is 1,075 fps.

I dug out the older boxes of Cor-Bon .38 Special with the 158-grain loads, advertised at the time to hit 1,000 fps. Out of the Python, that bullet roared downrange at 1,144 fps and the Model 19 snubby delivered them at a satisfactory 1,063 fps average with a high of 1,075 fps. When Cor-Bon began loading ammunition to comply strictly with specifications set down by the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturer's Institute (SAAMI), on which Pi now serves as a board member, it brought to an end the +P+ designation ammunition. However, he said the company did its research, re-engineered the loads and came up with the current lineup.

I have no doubt that in other guns velocities from DPX ammunition will be as good or better, especially in



**DPX loads in .357 Magnum sizzled out of Workman's Python at better than 1,360 fps.**



**The chronograph tells the tale. Out of the author's 6 1/2-inch Blackhawk, DPX ammo in .41 Magnum warped across the screens at better than 1,300 fps.**



**The .45 ACP typically churns along at about 850 to 900 fps, but Cor-Bon's 185-grain DPX did quite a bit better, as shown on this chronograph screen.**



# COR-BON



*There's a fight-stopping group, fired using a two-hand hold. The author found this was typical of DPX .45 ACP ammunition he tested.*



*A close-up of the target shows majority of hits were inside the 9-ring, center-of-mass, and that translates to life-saving accuracy.*

semiautomatics with polygonal rifling in the barrels.

So much for speed. How about accuracy? I certainly did not expect the guns to shoot dead center with this new ammunition because they are all sighted to shoot my personal handloads. But even when the Cor-Bon ammunition went downrange and tracked right or left, and maybe a bit lower or higher, it grouped pretty well.

I tossed a tin can out onto the

sandy floor of the pistol range and started shooting. The can bounced out to a 25-yard berm and I continued banging away, primarily with the Python. I also ran several rounds through the Smith & Wesson and managed to consistently hit a can and then a small rock. If I can hit a target that small at 25 yards, no rabbit or other small game animal, coyote, fox or anything bigger has a chance.

So, how does Cor-Bon do it? As noted earlier, Pi did plenty of experimenting.

"There are a lot of commercial



*Try this sometime: Hit a target as small as these rocks at 25 yards using a 2 1/2-inch Model 19.*

powders available, what we call OEM powders that are not available to the normal handloader," Pi explained, "and the reason is because they really require a lot of testing in a pressure testing lab. Pressure guns are usually not available to the normal handloader. He doesn't go out and buy pressure-testing equipment. "When we are testing," he continued, "one thing we do different from the larger companies is that we test our loads every 5,000 rounds."

Pi said the larger ammunition companies may turn out many



*Workman cut loose with both of his .41 Magnum Blackhawks, finding that he shot to the right and a bit low with the 6 1/2 incher, but using the shorter gun, he put several right in the middle of that target.*



## COR-BON

*Shifting to Cor-Bon's Hunter ammunition for rifles, Workman was back at the range with his Savage bolt-action in .308 Winchester.*



*The chronograph doesn't lie; the author was delighted with the average muzzle velocity of the Hunter .308 ammunition loaded with 168-grain projectiles.*

thousands of rounds with loads that produce lower pressures than Cor-Bon before they test a specific lot. Larger ammunition manufacturers may have to switch powders as they run low on a specific type but have developed various powder and bullet combinations to maintain consistent velocities.

According to Pi, his 5,000-round testing regimen is strictly followed, whether there is a change of propellants or not. "We test anyway," he said. "We work so close to the maximum pressure and stay under it, and that requires a lot of testing, and that's one of the reasons our

ammunition is pricier."

True enough. Cor-Bon is typically more expensive than ammunition from larger companies, but once the shooting starts, one concludes each round is worth its price.

In the mid-1970s, the Glaser Safety Slug was created by Jack Canon and marketed by a company founded by Armin Glaser in Sturgis, South Dakota, and it went through a couple of improvements over the years to enhance performance. In 2000, the company was acquired by Cor-Bon, which has maintained the quality of that legendary round. The projectile has a polymer tip that

*Switching to a .30-06 Marlin bolt action, the author once again found that Hunter ammunition has plenty of punch, and it shoots flat.*

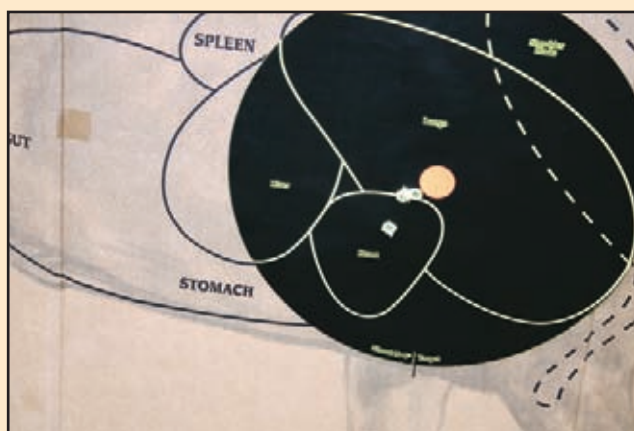


*That '06 ammo sizzles out of the muzzle! A 180-grain bullet at 2,875 fps translates to 3,304 foot-pounds of muzzle energy—getting up into .300 magnum territory!*





**Check that group! Those Birchwood Casey targets can't be fooled.**



**Workman's '06 put three rounds of 180-grain DPX right where they would do the most good.**

covers an inner charge of No. 6 or No. 12 shot. This round has tremendous stopping power.

An offshoot of that acquisition was the development of the Pow'R Ball load, which features a projectile with a specially-shaped lead core and a ball at the tip, which, when the round strikes, does two things. First,

it aids in deeper penetration and delays expansion, and it also enhances feeding into the chamber. The ball, Pi said, is slicker on the surface than the jacket of an FMJ bullet. He also said that the projectile was developed to produce at least 2 1/2 inches of penetration before it begins to expand. Having seen some

of this ammunition previously fired into gelatin blocks, I certainly won't argue that claim. For handgunners, Cor-Bon's DPX and Hunter ammunition is top notch, and anybody is well served by loading up with it.

Is that all? Heck no! As mentioned

*continued on page 93*

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## Freedom Group Tactical Seminar 2010



Ryan Smith, Bushmaster Product Manager of the ACR project, discusses some of the finer points of the modular rifle.

**F**requent readers may recall my trip to T1G/High Caliber Training's Arkansas facility in August 2009. In May 2010, I returned to the facility, finding it improved and even more impressive. It was filled with hard-bodied war fighters who came and went by helicopter, fired innu-



Magpul parts used in the ACR include the stock, sights, magazine, and forward grip.



The Bushmaster ACR is truly an adaptive system, including changing between 5.56 and 6.8 in a jiffy.

merable rounds, and punctuated things with the boom of occasional and unpredictable breaching charges.

I was not there to admire these dedicated young people, though they deserve it, but to attend the Freedom Group Tactical Seminar.

Freedom Group is the conglomerate that gobbled up Remington, Bushmaster, DPMS/Panther Arms, Marlin, H&R, NEF, Dakota Arms, L. C. Smith, Parker, AAC, Barnes Bullets, EOTAC and INTC. On the plate for our viewing and shooting pleasure were a number of firearms designed for defensive and offensive use, although many might work in the hunting and competition world. As the email said, "A sneak peek at the itinerary includes plenty of trigger time with the new Bushmaster ACR, Remington 1911 R1 and some great offerings from the Remington Custom Shop." Toss in Remington's 887 and 870 Tactical shotguns, and you've got a pretty good idea of what we saw. Toss in a lot of bullets headed downrange, and you have a great idea of what we did!

T1G/HCT's (founded by Staff Sergeant Steve Reichert, USMC [Ret.], recipient of the Bronze Star with "V" device for Valor), great facility was a perfect venue for the seminar. This facility was available because T1G/HCT are part of Freedom Group. (HCT is the civilian training side.)

Day One was dedicated to the Bushmaster ACR (Adaptive Combat Rifle), an extremely interesting bid

to replace the AR-15/M16 in the military/LE world, and, of course, ultimately the civilian world. The ACR began life as Magpul's Masada prototypes but required several critical modifications before full production—where it is now. Features include a modular aspect that





*Intermedia editor Eric Poole participated in the hands-on portion of the disassembly and reassembly of the ACR.*



*Bushmaster's ACR can be field stripped into these few components with only a punch.*



*Down Range TV founder Michael Bane puts a few rounds through the Bushmaster ACR from prone.*



*With an empty case in the air and the sights back on target, Scott Smith, banged away at distant steel.*



*The media got to put a few rounds through an ACR wearing an AAC can. Gary Paul Johnson said the ACR handled easily.*



*The ACR will be available in several different colors, wearing a variety of flash suppressors/muzzle brakes.*



*Executive Editor of the NRA's Shooting Illustrated, Guy Sagi kept making the steel clang with shots from the ACR.*

allows for quick change of the stock, barrel/caliber change, adjustable gas regulator, non-reciprocating charging handle and a short-stroke piston system. As we learned in the classroom, swapping the caliber is smooth and quick, with only one relatively small part to worry about.

After handling and shooting the ACR, my impression is it will be HOT! Novel ideas mixed in with a few design features from my favorite battle rifle, the FAL, and parts from the AR-15/M16 scattered throughout, the ACR is a treat to shoot. Recoil, though similar to the AR, felt less sharp, easier to make follow-up

shots. There was nary a bobble from the ACRs, despite the number of rounds we dumped through them. With the addition of an extended selector switch for folks with smaller hands, the ACR might be perfect.

Day Two found us split between the 200-yard range, with more ACRs and Remington's Custom Shop rifles, and HCT's all-steel Rogers Range, designed by ex-FBI agent and renowned trainer Bill Rogers, with Remington's 1911 R1 and tactical versions of 887 and 870 shotguns.

Remington has a history of producing John Browning's designs,

including a stint of WWI wartime 1911 production that ended in 1918. (Remington-Rand pistols from WWII were not from Remington.) The mil-spec-like 1911 R1 appeared to be well thought out and executed, a combination of the 1911 and 1911A1, with some modern tweaks. It is a shooter, with dovetailed three-dot sights, match-grade stainless steel barrel, steel mainspring housing, and a decent, short trigger I estimate required 5 to 6 pounds of pressure.

The cast frame and forged slide were well mated. In fact, Reming-



# TACTICAL GEAR



Media representatives had a chance to run a fun automobile defense scenario. Jim Sheppard of The Shooting Wire had one of the better times.



After exiting the vehicle with the rifle one had to shoot a nearby target with the stock folded.



Each participant had to move to a barricade, make a reload and ping five distant steel targets.

ton's goal was a pistol that required no hand fitting and, according to Carlos M. Martinez, Project Manager, they have met the goal. Lock work is standard 1911 design using a "Series 80" firing-pin safety. We shot the 1911



T1G/HCT founder, Staff Sergeant Steve Reichert, USMC (Ret.), gave us a demonstration of how the ACR performed in experienced hands.



Carlos M. Martinez explained the evolution of the Remington 1911 R1.

R1s in relays until the slides' muzzles were scorching hot and covered with soot, and they still worked! A good job by Remington.

Look for more versions to come. I suggested optional drop-in high ride beavertails, for those who don't have enough meat on their hands to consistently depress the traditional grip safety, and lowering and flaring the ejection port.

The Tactical 887 and 870 were a blast on the Rogers range, increasing my hit count over the handguns



The mil-spec-like 1911 R1 appeared to be well thought out and executed, a combination of the 1911 and 1911A1 with some modern tweaks.



While the grip safety is similar to those on Remington's first 1911s, over 90 years ago, the dovetailed sights are a marked improvement!



Remington's 1911 R1 field stripped just like a 1911 should!

on those pesky disappearing circles! With Remington's reduced-recoil buckshot loads, I found both long guns quite manageable. The robustness of the 887 is a definite plus, especially if you find yourself in a hard land.

On the 200-yard range we tried the ACRs again, including one wearing a highly effective AAC suppressor. The ACRs proved quite useable as the distance increased. From the Custom Shop we handled a handful of beautifully built rifles that did not



## TACTICAL GEAR



*Tactical long gun offerings from the custom shop were chambered for .308 for the 200-yard testing.*



*Scott Smith tried each of the long guns from a variety of positions.*



*Round after round was fired through the Tactical rifles without a glitch.*



*Matt Berger is not only a writer, he is an accomplished rifle shooter. He did not find one rifle he did not like.*



*This participant moved from rifle to rifle, never missing a shot.*



*As 1911.com's James Colby tries out a rifle chambered in .338 Lapua at 400 yards, one of the trainers from T1G spots for him.*

## CONTACTS

**Remington Arms Company**  
www.remington.com

**Bushmaster Firearms International LLC.**  
www.bushmaster.com

**Freedom Group**  
www.freedom-group.com

**High Caliber Training**  
www.hicaltraining.com



*Matt Berger found the ACR to be viable even at 400 yards.*



*Even from a hasty rest, this Remington Tactical Rifle easily placed rounds on steel 400 yards away.*

momentary delay that allowed the scope to return to target, with the sound arriving slightly later. Hit after hit was made by these Custom Shop rifles.

However, the ACR still had a few surprises. To the credit of the rifle when fired from a bench, every time its scope crosshairs dropped back on target (which they did quickly), I pressed the trigger and was rewarded with a hit on a steel silhouette target! Looks like Freedom Group's tactical offerings are at the top of their game. **GW**



BY D. K. PRIDGEN



*"Daniel Defense's DDM4v3 will not disappoint right out of the box!" is our "Tactical Gear" columnist judgment on this rifle. It is his personal choice of several fine AR offerings from this firm.*

**T**here's a ton more information available to folks on the Internet than a decade ago we could find using catalogs and gun magazines. Unfortunately, much is worth just what you paid! I still depend on the advice of trusted friends and associates who use and know the equipment I need help with.

While looking for an AR fore-end rail system to fit my smaller hands, I sent an inquiry to those I trust. Friend and trainer Steve Moses responded with a recommendation for the Daniel Defense Omega Rail. I ordered one for a mid-length AR article, and ultimately

kept the rifle and the Omega rail!

I knew Daniel Defense's reputation for manufacturing top-notch AR-15/M4 accessories before Steve's recommendation, but hands-on experience means much more. An effective design, the Omega rail was so well made I suspected everything else Daniel Defense made must be of the same quality. When an article on a Daniel Defense AR came up, I couldn't wait to get one in hand!

#### **Daniel Defense**

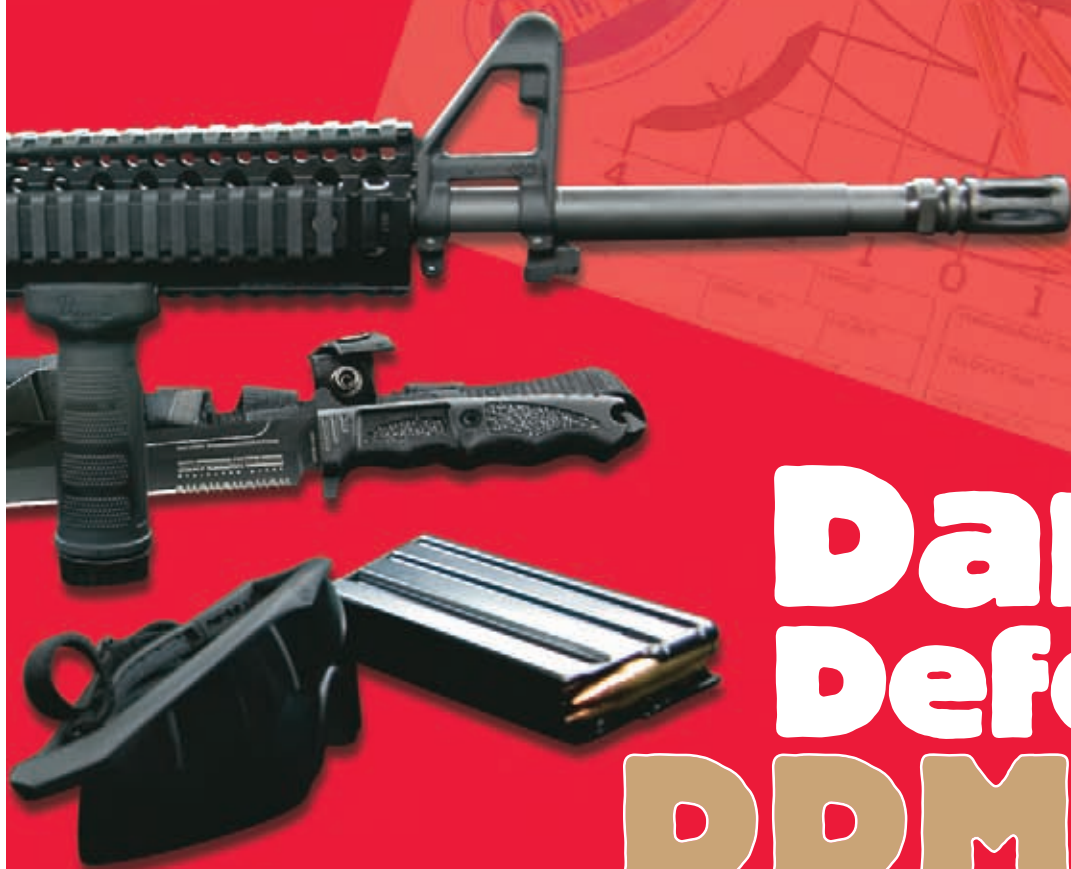
Founded in 2000, this Georgia-based company secured a number of prestigious military contracts, in addition to providing improved and

frequently lighter weight accessories to civilian and law enforcement. In the beginning, rail platforms were their core competency.

Rails still are important to Daniel Defense (They ship 4,000 to 5,000 per month!), perhaps the thing most people think of when their name is mentioned. DD are the Sole Source Provider of their RIS II rail platforms to the U.S. Special Operations Command and of the L85 rail to U.K. Ministry of Defense.

At the 2003 SHOT Show, Daniel Defense was across the aisle from Magpul, which was also considerably smaller than now. Daniel Defense's Marvin Daniel struck up





# Daniel Defense

## DDM4v3

**The AR Done Right**



*Adding Crimson Trace's grip and stepping into a darkened room proves the CQB ability of the combo quickly.*

an acquaintance with Magpul's Richard Fitzpatrick.

Both companies' have had phenomenal growth and it seemed natural for DD to consider Magpul parts to on the M4 project. According to Jay Duncan, Daniel's VP of Sales & Marketing, Magpul was the logical choice because "they have such great, high-quality, economical upgrade products and great delivery."

### DDM4V3

In 2008, Daniel Defense joined the list of manufacturers to acquire the consulting service of respected trainer and retired Special Forces Operator Larry Vickers. In fact, Vickers is its sole consultant.

From this association, the Daniel Defense M4 was born. As advertised, on the DDM4 "(e)very aspect of this rifle was engineered with the tactical

professional and shooting enthusiast in mind." In a nod to Larry Vickers' preference for "support hand as far forward as possible," DDM4 uses the Daniel Defense free-float, 12-inch Omega X FSP Rail System (Complete with indexing marks for accessory relocation.). The Omega 12.0 includes ambidextrous front swivel connection points and extends beyond the front sight. Low-profile rail guards are factory standard. While there are no shortages of AR manufacturers, the proof is in the pudding! Daniel Defense's reputation has not been tarnished by its M4s!

Several variations differ from the original DDM4 by using a shorter



# DANIEL



*The DDM4v3 uses Mil-Spec lowers of 7075 aluminum forgings with Type III hard coat anodizing. It has quick-detachable single point sling attachment point on the rear.*



*The Omega Rail system includes ambidextrous front swivel connection points.*



*The lower sports an enhanced and flared magazine well for easier reloads.*



*The Magpul trigger guard is enhanced for glove usage. The quick-detachable single-point sling attachment point on lower's rear is noticeable in this photo.*



*Omega X rails have indexing marks for accessory relocation.*

Omega Rail system. Their DDM4v3 is my favorite iteration of the AR, with everything found on the previous versions adding the mid-length gas system I prefer.

The DDM4v3 is built from Daniel Defense Mil-Spec upper and lowers which use 7075 aluminum forgings with Type III hard coat anodizing. The lower sports an enhanced and flared magazine well with quick-detachable single point sling attach-

ment point on the rear. The two fit together with nary a sign of play—providing excellent accuracy potential. The fighting rifle, Mil-Spec single stage trigger broke at 7.25 pounds. M4 feed ramps provide improved function.

On this rugged platform Daniel Defense adds their best parts: 9-inch Omega X rail system; magnetic particle inspected, mil-spec bolt carrier group with staked gas key; H-Buffer; high pressure, magnetic particle inspected, ordnance grade 4150 steel,



*The Omega X fore-end rail mates perfectly with the rail portion on the upper.*

M4 profile, cold hammer forged, chrome lined 16-inch barrel, with a 5.56 chamber, and black phosphate coating; A2 birdcage flash hider; "F" marked triangle front sight base and A1.5 fixed rear sight; Mil-Spec five-position buffer tube; well staked gas key; and, Daniel Defense A2 vertical foregrip. They add MagPul's MOE adjustable buttstock, trigger guard, and 30-round PMag.

Looking over the details of the DDM4, it is obvious thought and consideration went into the project—as into all their products. Take the injection-moulded nylon vertical foregrip. It installs without tools, offers a non-reflective finish, insulates the hand from heat, and stores one AA or two 123 batteries in a waterproof compartment.

Because they felt cold-hammer-forged barrels last longer with more accuracy, Daniel chose them and added this barrel production to their capabilities. (The barrel has passed all endurance tests with flying colors.) Building the barrels in-house allows DD to give them more quality checks, and care, which produces higher



*Magpul's Original Equipment stock provides an excellent working unit, adjustable but locking solidly in place, with shielded release and polymer butt pad.*



**DANIEL DEFENSE M4v3 PERFORMANCE**

Load	Velocity	ES	SD	Accuracy
Remington 55 AccuTip-V BT	3,000	19	33	0.89/1.21
Federal 55 Tactical Load	2,931	28	53.7	0.69/1.23
Federal 55 FMJ BT	2,901	40	13.3	0.98/1.30
Hornady 60 TAP Urban	3,066	22	44.6	0.55/1.18
Cor-Bon 62 DPX	2,799	26	74.1	1.22/1.31
Winchester 62 FMJ USA	2,903	18	43.1	0.89/0.99
Black Hills 68 HP Match	2,728	7	17.6	0.87/1.01
Hornady 75 BTHP TAP Precision	2,264	16	39.1	1.13/1.23
Black Hills 75 HP Match	2,649	19	44.4	0.83/1.29

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second for an average of five shots using a PACT Chrono, accuracy in inches per three-shot/five-shot group at 100 yards. Chronograph screens set 10 feet from muzzle. Ambient temperature 70 F.



*The polymer butt pad on the Magpul stock keeps the stock from slipping on the shoulder.*

quality. The 1:7 twist should fire bullets weighing as much as 77 grains quite well.

Vickers thinks a BUIS should be a fixed metal version, simple in design and with no sharp edges. The A1.5 rear one-piece Fixed Backup Iron Sight should offer everything needed for a flattop receiver with reflex sight and minimize weight. It is CNC machined from 6061 aircraft grade aluminum and receives Mil-Spec hard coat anodizing. The A1.5 installs using a slotted fastener threaded into a self-locking steel thread insert and has A1 sight adjustment and an A2 aperture. The skeletonized portion of the A1.5 helps in weight reduction and permits using the DD "Rock & Lock" installation system. (DD is working on a comparable

folding BUIS that addresses common folder deficiencies.)

The MOE (Magpul Original Equipment) stock provides an excellent working unit, adjustable but locking solidly in place, with a shielded release and polymer butt pad (To keep the stock from slipping). And, it fits on a mil-spec buffer tube, which is a little heavier than commercial tubes. The Magpul trigger guard is enhanced for glove usage.



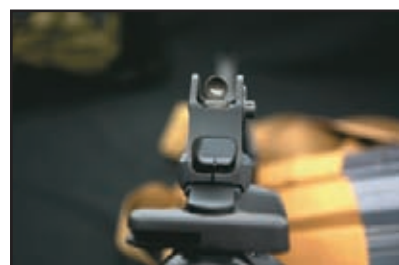
*An "F" marked triangle front sight base rides the barrel of the DDM4v3*



*From ordnance-grade 4150 steel, the M4-profile, 16-inch barrel, cold-hammer-forged barrel is chrome-lined, has a 5.56 chamber and black phosphate coating.*



*The Daniel Defense A1.5 rear one-piece Fixed Backup Iron Sight should offer everything needed for a flattop receiver with reflex sight and minimize weight.*



*DD's A1.5 rear sight is skeletonized to shave off weight but has a split bottom to use Daniel's "Rock and Lock" attachment method.*

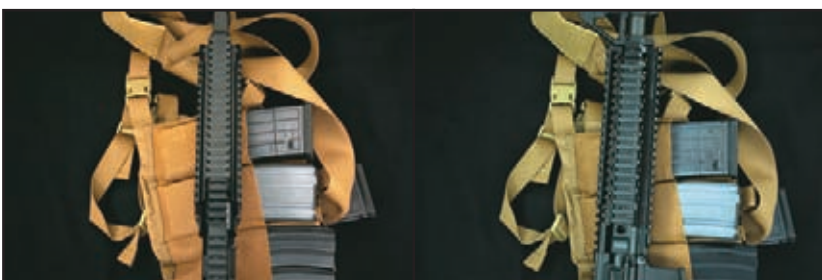
Just removing the DD M4v3 from its case and handling for balance and feel, I was impressed by the rifle. It gave me the same impression I get when handling a custom pistol—confidence backed by quality. I needed to hit the range!

### PRE-RANGE DECISIONS

I needed two sights for the DDM4—a quality scope to help me determine what accuracy the rifle was capable of and an electronic sight to allow me to use the rifle quickly and easily during a few exercises. With age, iron sights no longer suffice! For accuracy evaluation, I chose the aluminum Dark Ops Counter Sniper Optics 2x16 and their rings. CSO scopes have specially coated optics, and this one had, perhaps, the sharpest and



## DANIEL



*The Omega X Rail System is oval, which means it is narrower from side to side than from top to bottom. Low-profile rail guards are factory standard.*

brightest optics I have seen!

EOTech recently sent one of its latest Holographic sights, the EXPS3, which is smaller than their other versions. It uses one 123 battery, with the battery compartment mounted sideways. This reduces rail space usage. As always, the EOTech holographic system provided a large view window and a quick 65 MOA circle with 1 MOA center-aiming dot inside. All EOTech products are rock-solid performers and with weight reduced to 11 ounces and new adjustable rail mount, the EXPS3 is sure to be a hit.

I turned to Blue Force Gear for their UDC Padded Bungee Single



*An A2 bird cage is found on the DDM4v3's muzzle.*



*The legs concealed inside Grip Pod's polymer foregrip snapped out of the body forcefully and locked into place to stay, but retracted easily.*

Point Sling, configurable with a variety of swivel adapter ends. They supplied the needed quick connector adapter and several other ends, along with two slings in foliage green and Crye Multicam.

Blue Force also supplied foliage green and Multicam Ten-Speed Chest Rigs for AR magazines. With an elastic body holding the magazines (BF is the only company with Crye Multicam elastic.), these vests are lightweight but sturdy, and can be easily concealed.

Despite the good design of the DD vertical foregrip, I had two others on hand I wanted to give a shot. The Grip Pod has been in use for some time by quite a few of the guys downrange in Iraq and Afghanistan. The legs concealed inside my polymer version snapped out of the body forcefully and locked into place to



*Crimson Trace's MVF-515 Green vertical foregrip is as comfortable and effective as a standard foregrip, despite having additional capabilities.*



*For accuracy evaluation the author chose the aluminum Dark Ops Counter Sniper Optics 2x16 and their rings.*

stay, but retracted easily. With the Grip Pod you can take a low profile, steady, supported prone position quickly. Certainly makes long shots easier, and still works fine as a traditional vertical foregrip.

I was lucky enough to obtain an early sample of Crimson Trace's new MVF-515 Green vertical foregrip



*The author quickly realized the DDM4v3 was a shooter! At 200 yards, he reproducibly placed hits on a head size target with every load tested. That hammer-forged barrel really works!*

*continued on page 92*



**Ex-cop 870s  
make great base  
guns. This former  
Highway Patrol  
veteran modified  
by Vang Comp  
and refinished by  
Robar Industries  
has a new lease  
on life in the  
desert with a  
generic nylon  
carry sling.**



C.J. PRISBRY



TEXT AND PHOTOS BY DENIS PRISBREY

# GETTING THE MOST FROM REMINGTON'S 870 'RIOT GUN'

## A Best Choice for Tough Country, Hard Times and Rough People

A true classic in the firearms world is one that's risen to the top over a period of many years to stand out from the crowd and stay there. Remington's 870 pumpgun certainly qualifies as one of them. From its inception as the sporting Wingmaster in 1950, the 870 was designed from the beginning to combine rugged durability with ease of manufacture, and it's done so well in meeting the needs of hunters, law enforcement, and regular people looking for a dependable defensive shotgun since then that production figures exceeded 10 million in 2009, making the 870 one of the greatest firearms success stories in the history of gunpowder. Besides its popularity in the hunting field, and despite many more modern semi-auto designs available, the 870 continues to be used by military and law enforcement units around the globe, and that's a strong endorsement coming from climates where a malfunctioning gun can mean much more than merely a lost duck or deer.

Two generations have grown up knowing the 870, and learned that in



*Remington's ultimate Police PMAX 870 comes fully dressed in factory form with adjustable sights and an integrated light fore-end. The author replaced the black furniture with another set of Desert Digital Speedfeeds and attached a brown stretch nylon KUDU sling from Blackhawk!.*

12-gauge form the very versatile 870 has a formidable ability to handle everything from rabbits to snakes, deer, coyotes, wolves, boar, cougar, bears, moose, crocodiles, yeti, chupacabra, and numerous other miscellaneous swamp and forest monsters, mythical or real. Its effectiveness on all known species of zombie (traditional and apocalyptic) is legendary. The 12-gauge Remington 870 with a relatively short barrel, decent sights, and a good recoil pad, is arguably one of the best insurance policies you can own for certain times, places, and situations, just as useful in an inner-city environment as it is in high timber or low desert locales. With proper ammunition selection, even an 18-inch barrel with cylinder bore "choke" can double as a hunting gun in a pinch, just about any buckshot load can handle a rabid or otherwise aggressive medium-sized fur bearer moving in close, most run-of-the-mill slugs can harvest a deer at

surprising distances for a smoothbore barrel, and a properly designed hard lead flat-nosed slug can stop a charging rhino if your aim's good and your nerves are steady.

One of the best values in all-round



*Scattergun Technologies' 14-inch Border Patrol Model fits into tight spaces with four-round Speedfeed Digital Desert camouflage furniture from Remington and an Uncle Mike's 1907-style military-style leather sling.*



*Here's a look at the front sight, magazine extension, and porting on the Vang Comp conversion. This barrel can place all 12 pellets of Federal's 3-inch Vital-Shok Maximum Flitecontrol buckshot into 17.5 inches at a full 40 yards.*



# 870 RIOT



*The author's 14-inch-barrel conversion from Scattergun Technologies has a tall-bladed tritium-insert front sight, a one-round magazine extension and sling capability.*

defensive gunnery you'll find anywhere, with a strong steel frame, twin action bars to eliminate fore-end twist-binding during cycling, a securely supported bolt lockup, the capability of direct-chambering through the ejection port, a modular design enabling easy cleaning, readily available parts, and sizable aftermarket support for both accessories and services, the 870 seems to run two miles short of forever with minimal care, and it's a very uncomplicated gun to operate.

A bare-bones basic 870 with 18-inch barrel, bead sight, and standard four-shot magazine tube is nothing I'd want to stand in front of, but it's less efficient in longer range slug accuracy and on-board ammunition capacity. You can dump sizable sums of money into accessories, but after 30-plus years of working with the defensive shotgun, I've found sights, an extended magazine tube, and a good basic stock justify their costs better than many other doodads, and you can achieve a viable goal quite well by starting out with an older police trade-in or a current new Express model as a base gun without breaking the bank. For upgrading, emergency field repairs in the back country or merely increasing your self-sufficiency if a Katrina-type disaster

hits your town, consider some options with an eye to keeping it practical and keeping it going on your own.

## WHERE TO START?

Your base gun can be just about any version of the 870 and doesn't have to be new. I own three in various configurations, the oldest and most rebuilt was acquired several years ago as a Utah Highway Patrol trade-in. Used it was, and ugly it came. Shortly after I paid my \$150 for it, the old vet was sent off to Vang Comp Systems to be revamped completely. Vang upgraded several internal action components, lengthened the forcing cone, back-bored the barrel and ported it, all to improve patterning and to reduce and re-direct recoil. The thin factory magazine follower was replaced by a sturdy solid polymer, the 1960's-era much-varnished wood was replaced by Rem-



*The Remington PMAX sports a substantial dovetailed front sight post with a white-dot insert as well as a two-round magazine extension.*

ington black synthetic furniture with a decent recoil pad, Vang's large-headed crossbolt safety button replaced the original part, a big blade front sight was installed in place of the older bead, and MMC adjustable sights were added. The end result was a vast improvement in handling, comfort, and performance.

My second oldest is one of the first Express models from the 1990s. It came Parkerized, with walnut-stained hardwood furniture, a less-than-ideal recoil pad, a four-shot magazine and a bead front sight. Shortly after, the Express was shipped to the original Scattergun Technologies company (now owned by Wilson Combat) and transformed into their 14-inch Border Patrol Model with Trak-Lock ghosting adjustable rear and tall-bladed tritium-insert front sight, a one-round magazine extension, sling capability, a heavy-duty magazine spring, a solid non-binding polymer follower, an oversized crossbolt safety button, and a non-removable modified choke insert. (This conversion required the appropriate federal tax stamp process.) A Pachmayr recoil pad was installed later.

My most recent is a four-year-old 870 PMAX, arguably the top of the line in Remington's police offerings. Mine came with an 18-inch barrel, Parkerized finish, updated rear Scattergun Tech Trak-Lock aperture, substantial dovetailed front post with a very visible, large, white-dot, two-round magazine extension, a SureFire fore-end with integral light, a solid polymer magazine follower, and a pistol-gripped Speedfeed stock with Limb-Saver recoil pad. This one already came so well equipped that it didn't need much else done to it.

Law enforcement trade-ins are getting harder to come by, and prices have gone up but still offer good value as a base gun if you can find one. Chances are excellent that the insides will be in much better shape than the outsides, those guns have been usually been carried infinitely harder than they've been fired. Older Wingmasters are good prospects for conversion to defensive use, and any of the current