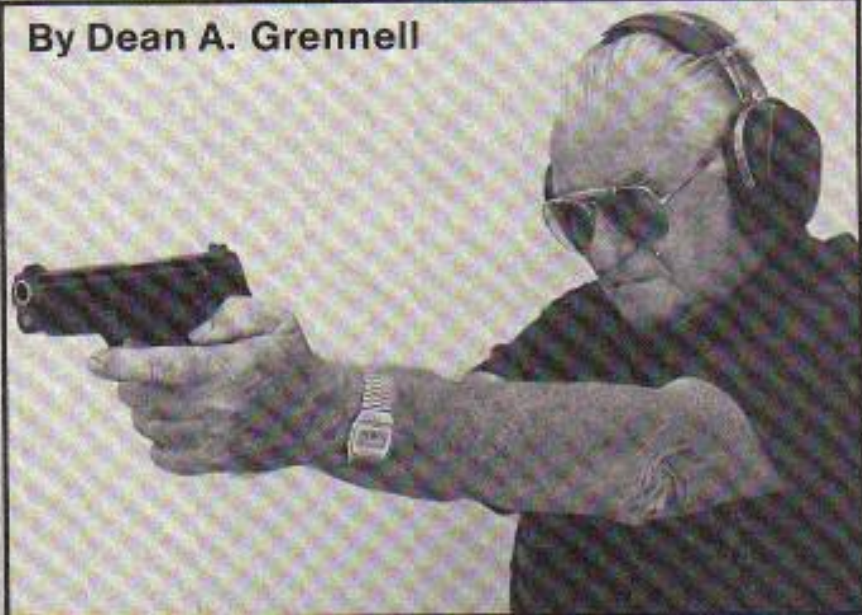


Wringing out AMT's "On Duty"

By Dean A. Grennell



Grennell found the pistol quite comfortable to fire in terms of felt recoil, but the DAO trigger system hampered accuracy. Production guns will have optional DA/SA.

BEDDED SOLIDLY in sandbags atop the benchrest, I took careful aim at the lower edge of the 1.25-inch aiming pastier, twenty-five yards down-range and began to nurse the trigger through its double-action pull. One lone round of Winchester's factory load in .40 S&W was in the chamber and I'd been pleased to discover this is one AMT pistol with which you can hand-chamber a cartridge, let the slide bang home and it goes cheerfully into battery without hesitation. Most AMT pistols refuse to chamber a round unless it's fed from the magazine.

The sights on the test pistol were fixed, with a white dot on either side of the rear notch and a

single white dot on the rear of the front sight. The rear sight can be drifted in its dovetail to correct for windage. There is enough black area around the white dots to provide a reasonably decent sight picture, with bright sunlight coming over your shoulder — as it was over mine.

The trigger continued millimetering to the rear and, at length, the hammer dropped and the cartridge went off. The recoil was moderate and controllable. The report was no more than a "chugg" through my Safariland earmuffs. According to the faithful Oehler Model 35P chronograph, the bullet had traversed the dis-

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General appearance of the On Duty is reminiscent of the SIG-Sauer and it is remarkably convenient in use. Note the dual cocking serrations at both front and rear of the slide.

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tance from six feet to ten feet ahead of the muzzle at a velocity of 984 feet per second (fps) with a 180-grain bullet, that's good for 387 foot-pounds of energy (fpe) and we customarily quote such performance as 984/387. Velocity times weight in grains, divided by 1000 gives the major power factor (MPF), with 175 as the usual minimum for certain action handgun events. This shot works out to 177 and it would qualify, with a thin margin to spare.

The hole ripped the lower edge of the aiming paste; possibly three-sixteenths to the left and one-thirty-second above the precise point of aim, but what the heck? It was a fearsome temptation to quit while I was that far ahead, but I didn't. The entire five-shot group resembled a reversed letter L, with an extreme spread, center-to-center, of 3.395 inches for an angular dispersion of 12.967 minutes of angle (MOA); to paraphrase a favorite phrase of GUN WORLD's editor/publisher, "I've done better on a dark night along the Giza!"

Velocities for the other four shots ran: 989, 977, 985 and 973 for a five-shot average of 981.6 fps/385.2 fpe/176.68 MPF. Even so, this is one of the few autoloading .40 S&W pistols I've encountered that can bootstrap the Winchester load over the 175 MPF mark.

New factory fodder keeps turning up and co-worker Eric Kincaid warmed my heart — at a spot between the left ventricle and right cockle — by bringing in two fifty-round boxes of .40 S&W put up by Pro Load (Dept. GW, Box 1992, Burbank, CA 91507), using jacketed hollow-point (JHP) bullets in weights of 150 and 180 grains. The 180-grain load averaged 1076/463 and 194 MPF, printing five to a center-spread of 3.296 inches.

The 150-grain Pro Load averaged 1253/523 and 188 MPF, with a group spread of 3.058 inches.

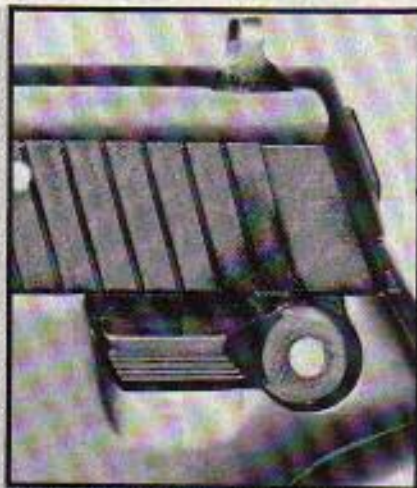
The Hornady Custom load, with its 180-grain Hornady XTP bullet, averaged 1010/408 for 182 MPF, with 4.507 inches of vertical dispersion and only about 1.152 inches of horizontal spread.

This was my first encounter with a DA-only auto since the Thomas .45, well back into the Seventies. I doubt it'll ever become hopelessly infatuated with the concept. It certainly has its advantages in combat at distances where your opponent's halitosis might pose a problem. As distances increase, I tend to view DA-only for autoloading pistols as a sort of guaranteed, built-in flinch and who needs that?

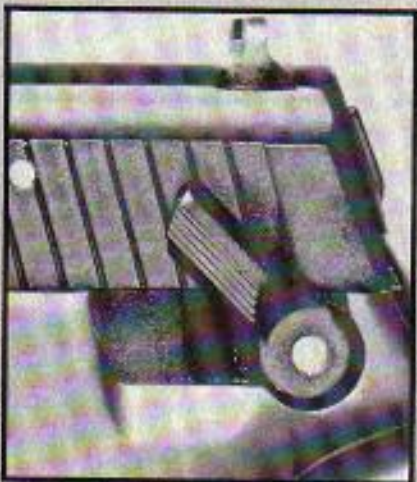
It should be noted the prototype is double-action-only, but production models will offer the additional option of double-action for the first shot, shifting to single-action for subsequent shots, with the option of manually cocking the hammer for the first shot.

It is possible to do decent shooting in DA mode and I've done so with revolvers, usually in Smith & Wesson persuasion. Typically, the trigger moves back smoothly to reach a distinctively recognizable stage, at which the cylinder is locked up and a few more ounces on the trigger produce a smooth, jar-free let-off which minimizes sight picture disturbance. I have yet to encounter any such delightful trigger in any autoloading pistol, including those made by Smith & Wesson. How good is decent in this context? I'm talking about holding all the bits on a 1.25-inch aiming paste at twenty-five yards in DA mode, off sandbags on the bench.

While I was at it, I put one round apiece of two different loads from MagSafe Ammo (Dept.



The prototype has a single thumb safety on the left side of the slide and it's in firing mode when down.



With the safety lever moved up, as here, the trigger is disengaged and the On Duty pistol is in safe mode.

GW, 2725 Friendly Grove Road NE, No. 115, Olympia, WA 98503) through the test gun. The first carries an 84-grain jacketed bullet, with nickel-plated No. 2 shot pellets sealed in epoxy until the moment of impact. One round of that came out of the AMT On Duty at 1882/661. The second load will defeat level II Kevlar body armor and, for that reason, MagSafe restricts its sale exclusively to law enforcement agencies and personnel; it has a 74-grain bullet, similar in construction to the 84-grain and one round of it came out of the AMT at only 1887/585. Both shots struck the target within four inches of the aiming point, a far cry from certain other types of pre-fragmented handgun ammunition.

In earlier testing of the .40 S&W cartridge, I'd worked up a load that put 10.0 grains of Accurate Arms No. 7 (AA-7) powder behind the 170-grain Nosler JHP bullet at a cartridge overall length (COL) of 1.129 inches. It seemed to be a useful performer and I'd made up a modest quantity for future use. I put five of those through the AMT On Duty and got an average of 1070/432, with a spread of 3.133 inches.

The fact did not escape me that my erstwhile pet load did not come up to snuff against either of the Pro Load entries in terms of target-troubling potential. It was a case of back to the old drawing board and I made up a few more reloads to try out of the AMT's barrel, which measures

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approximately 4.606 inches from muzzle crown to standing breech. It's rifled with six grooves at a pitch of one turn in twelve inches, left-hand.

I still had a handful of the 150-grain Nosler JHP bullets and I've just had word from Accurate Arms' Marty Liggins that Nosler now has a 135-grain JHP in .400-inch diameter. That bit of news made my eyeballs light up like a pinball machine on the verge of critical mass. We'll be checking those out in the issues up ahead. I trust.

In the meantime, I made up escalating charges of Hodgdon HS-6 powder behind the 150-grain Nosler JHP. I'm not all that redundantly acquainted with HS-6, so I started quite low — as will be fulsomely apparent — and worked my way up cautiously:

CHARGE, GRAINS OF HS-6	FPS/FPE/MPF
6.5	772/199/116
7.25	909/275/136
8.1	1004/336/151
8.75	1078/387/162
9.5	1190/472/179

I might have been able to go a little higher on the charge weight. You'll note that 9.5 grains got me past the performance of the Pro Load with the 180-grain bullet, but still a bit scant of their 150-grain load. I'll note the oddly precise-sounding charge weights stem from my usual practice of cranking ten charges into the scale pan, weighing and dividing by ten for the average drop weight.

There are several powders I still want to try in the .40 S&W and IMR's 800-X was one of them. I made up three gradually escalating loads with 800-X behind the 155-grain Hornady No. 4000 JHP bullets, resulting in these averages:

CHARGE, GRAINS OF 800 X	FPS/FPE/MPF
6.4	971/325/151
7.35	1063/389/165
8.1	1133/442/176

Again, a trifle more powder might have been a good idea, but it's difficult to crystal ball these things in advance of the actual test-firing.

On previous runs, I'd had fairly encouraging results using compressed capacity charges of Accurate Arms No. 9 (AA-9) behind the heavier bullets. A comparatively slow-burning powder, AA-9 is less apt to develop ruinous pressures at the charge weight involved.

I put 12.0 grains of AA-9 behind the 150-grain Sierra No. 8430 JHP bullet, at a COL of 1.190 inches and got an average of 1291/555/194, with a solid edge over the 150-grain Pro Load's 1253/523/188.

With the same charge of 12.0 grains of AA-9 behind a 180-grain Sierra No. 8460 JHP bullet, at a COL of 1.190 inches, the test loads were a bit too long to feed from the magazine, so I hand-chambered them and got an average of 1250/625/225. Obviously, the charge can be cut back to obtain the maximum COL with performance to spare and a bit.

Designed by AMT's Larry Grossman, the On Duty weighs two pounds six ounces, with the empty magazine in place. The slide is made from 17-4PH stainless steel and the frame is of 6061 aluminum alloy. The stock slabs are

moulded from carbon fiber plastic. The hammer is A2 tool steel and the blocks in the slide and frame are of 17-4. Magazine capacity is thirteen rounds of .40 S&W, with the option of carrying a fourteenth round in the chamber. Production versions of the On Duty will incorporate a firing pin block and will have a rear sight adjustable for both elevation and windage. In addition to .40 S&W, present plans include offering the On Duty in other calibers such as 10mm Auto and .45 ACP.

Additional information regarding the On Duty may be requested from AMT (Dept. GW, 6226 Santos Diaz, Irwindale, CA 91702).

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