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Display Until Aug. 29, 2005

GUN TEST

Para-Ordinance CCW .45ACP

A pretty face with a dead-on aim!

By D.K. Pridgen

Curiosity is quite a motivator. Though I've never previously handled a Para-Ordinance pistol, I had watched as LDA-equipped Paras came and went at the local shootery, and showed up for our monthly IDPA matches, and that started me wondering how they shot. At the Las Vegas 2004 SHOT Show, I stopped by Para-Ordinance's booth. I have a predilection for single-stack carry 1911s with Commander length slides and Officer length frames, which drew my eyes toward Para's front row display and the CCW. I had to pick it up. It felt good in the hand, and with the first press of the trigger I was very interested!

Gun Details

Finally, the CCW arrived. After triple checking the pistol I asked my wife to try the LDA trigger pull. She complied, and turned with a quizzical look.

"That really seems light, doesn't it?" she asked, summing up the LDA's attraction. In fact, most who handle a LDA for the first time probably wonder "How do they do that?" followed by "Yeah, but will it pop a primer every time?"

As a scientist of over 30 years I can answer the first, Ted Szabo's engineering magic! As for the second question, my shooter's side answers, yep!

I even had my younger son, Brian, try the LDA. His response was that the weight of the trigger seemed about the same as a custom 1911 we had just finished shooting. My "Okay. But it's a double-action trigger," brought a look of understanding. The baby's butt slick 5-pound trigger pull became even more impressive.

As impressive as it is, LDAs are no longer new kids on the block. Para-Ordinance has offered it since 1999. However, the CCW does carry several of the newest improvements from Para.

Running across the front strap are Para's new treatment, nine horizontal Griptor grasping grooves. These are just the ticket for those wanting enhanced control with none of the potential downsides of checkering—too abrasive on clothing, or equally abrasive on hands. In the latter group, friend Jerry Land could not say enough good things about the Griptor grooves.

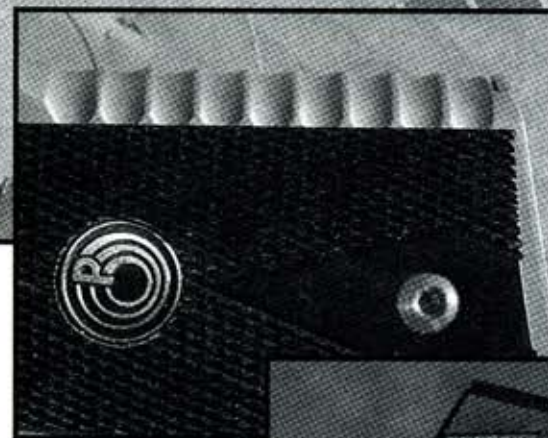
With a good bit of shooting out of the way, I can say the tighter one holds the pistol, the deeper the fingers are driven in the Griptor grooves, providing very impressive retention and control. Griptor grooves can be added easily during manufacturing, where other less-abrasive treatments, such as



With slim grips and abbreviated grip safety the LDA's pivoting trigger on the single stack CCW was easily reached.



The author found the Para-Ordinance CCW one of the finest concealed carry/defensive pistols he had handled.



▲ Griptor grasping grooves are highly effective, without any potential harshness of checkering.

The CCW's bobbed hammer is nearly at full rearward movement.



▲ When the LDA trigger system is not set, the hammer rides flush with the slide.

► Cycling the slide sets the LDA trigger system for firing and raises the hammer slightly out from the slide.



Para-Ordnance CCW .45ACP

stippling, are much more time-consuming and thus more expensive.

The second new feature of the CCW is the spring-operated Power Extractor (PXT). Considering a number of pistols, such as the Browning High-Power, already utilize a spring-loaded extractor what, you might ask, is the big deal? To clarify, Para's innovation is not an external extractor, as with so many others. Rather, it is a spring-operated internal extractor!

With the extractor inside, it's better protected from dirt and debris, if one drops the pistol or finds themselves in the dirt. Because the extractor is spring-loaded it is not prone to damage from dropping the first round into the chamber and letting the slide slam home. This ill-mannered action can eventually lead to the breakage of traditional extractors. Even without such abuse, traditional extractors frequently require tuning with use. Not so the PXT. In addition to the benefits of the PXT's spring feature, the design also provides a more massive claw (50% bigger) to grasp case rims. All of these are good things!

The PXT and Griptor grasping grooves are part of Para's renovation of their entire line. And impressive innovations they are! However, there's lots more to the CCW. In keeping with its name, the CCW has been designed with virtually all the amenities one could want in a concealable pistol that can deliver the goods on the firing line.

Start with a stainless steel frame and slide. The former bobbed down to accept Officer-size magazines with the previously mentioned Griptor grooves and black, double-diamond polymer grips held in place by stainless steel hex screws. The bead-blasted frame also has a trim, single-side thumb safety, slightly extended magazine release, and beveled magazine well. The black, checkered mainspring housing is the same polymer used on the grips.



Even during the slide's cycling, the CCW's hammer shows no potential for biting the hand that feeds it!

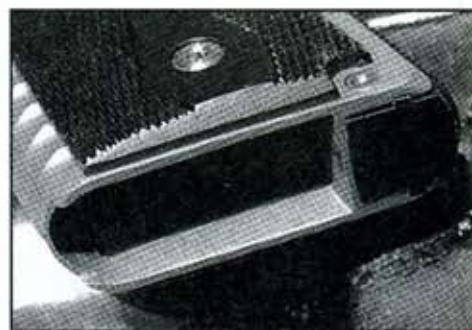
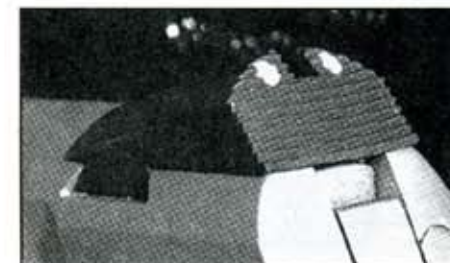


The checkered mainspring housing is made of a tough polymer.



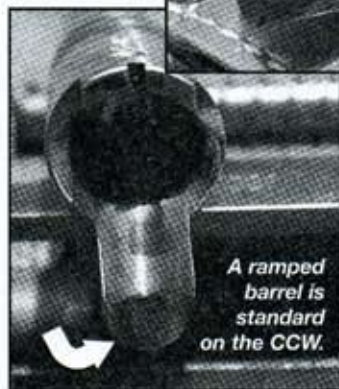
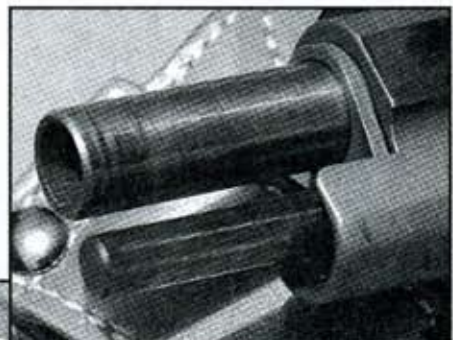
Front and rear sights were black, contrasting well with the slide, and had white dots. Both were mounted in dovetails.

The rear sight was rounded for improved snag resistance and featured horizontal serrations to reduce any glare.



Beveling in the magazine well aides reloads.

A full-length guide rod rides beneath the CCW's solid barrel bushing.



A ramped barrel is standard on the CCW.



To provide "drop safety" protection the CCW utilizes a firing pin safety system.



When applied the thumb safety locks the slide and disengages the trigger.

An effective dehorning job and a lowered and flared ejection port are just two of the niceties one finds on the Para CCW.



Breaking with today's trend, the beavertail grip safety is reduced in size. It can afford to be because the hammer on the CCW is sheared off flush with the slide. And of course there is the LDA system with its wide, smooth, pivoting trigger.

The slide houses a ramped 4.25-inch barrel with solid bushing and full-length recoil spring guide rod. Flats are highly polished with other areas bead-blasted. Speaking of the flats, the rear-only cocking serrations are shaped like the Griptor grooves on the front strap. The ejection port is lowered and flared nicely. Black, snag-free sights utilize the three white dot system, and contrast nicely with the stainless slide into which they are dovetailed.

(Optional tritium inserts are available from Para's Pro Shop.) Horizontal serrations cut the glare on the rear sight. All the black parts contrast with the stainless slide and frame to make the CCW a visually impressive pistol.

A nice de-horning job makes the CCW a pleasure to carry. In addition to the thumb safety (which disconnects the trigger) and grip safety, the slide and frame incorporate a firing pin safety system. Not enough safeties? Factor in the long trigger stroke of the LDA and anyone should be satisfied.

Range Time

PXT, LDA, Griptor, and all the other niceties on the CCW add up to a lot of potential. Until the CCW proved its stuff at the range, though, it was just a pretty face!

Fear not. The CCW has plenty of depth to go with that pretty face. Its first stint on the firing line showed what this Para could do, and what it could do was shoot!

A few favorite loads zipped out of the CCW and poked very impressive groups of holes in a target 15 yards from the muzzle. The average for all five loads



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CZ 100



CZ 83

Performance Para-Ordnance CCW .45ACP

Load	Velocity	ES	SD	Accuracy
CorBon 165 Pow'R Ball +P	1130	35	13.1	1.46
Hornady 200 +P XTPHP	944	17	9.3	1.16
CCI-Speer 200 GDHP +P	1047	24	10.0	1.31
Remington 230 GSHP	843	17	17.3	1.09
Federal 230 HSHP	856	8	8.6	1.39

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity, ES (Extreme Spread) and SD (Standard Deviation) in feet per second (fps) by PACT Chrono, accuracy in inches for five 5-shot groups from 15 yards. Temperature: 70 degrees.

Para-Ordnance CCW .45ACP

Couple the CCW with the IWB Pro or Heinie's DOJ, Streamlight's NF-2, and a Spyderco for an effective defensive package.



Field stripping the CCW is done the same as any other 1911.

▼ Heinie' Ladies DOJ includes two spacers to adjust the holster's fit to the female form.



was just a bit over 1.25 inches, with both the Hornady 200-grain XTP +P and Remington GSHP poking holes that clustered in the 1-inch neighborhood. I utilized six- and seven-round magazines from a number of makers, all functioning perfectly with the CCW.

Gotta tell you, the Para CCW not only shot well but handled well. It did not take long for an old 1911 shooter like me to become comfortable with the CCW and its LDA trigger system. Doesn't hurt, of course, that I started off with a revolver and can be found shooting them and DAO pistols occasionally!

At the range my wife got an opportunity to work with Heinie's 703 Ladies DOJ Holster. A nicely concealable belt holster, it's fast, thanks to the low-cut front, and can be adjusted to fit a woman's curve, thanks to spacers that come with it.

The CCW rode well for me in one of Dillon Precision's new IWB Pro holsters. With a single, wide belt loop at the rear, the IWB Pro's thin profile makes it concealable and comfortable. Comfort and concealment do not negate speed, though. The combination of pistol and holster was as fast as I have found. I eventually began toting the Para CCW in the IWB Pro.

Jerry Land put the Para PXT through its paces and was duly impressed. Note case in air and sights back on target.

▲ Para's CCW certainly leaves nothing to be desired in the accuracy area.



Specification Para-Ordnance CCW

Caliber: .45ACP
Barrel: 4.25 inches
OA Length: 7.7 inches
Height: 5 inches
Weight: 34 ounces
Grips: Double diamond, slim, polymer with stainless steel hex screws
Sights: Dovetail mounted, low profile, black with 3 dots, optional tritium inserts
Action: LDA
Features: Griptor grasping grooves on front strap and slide, Power Extractor, abbreviated hammer and beavertail grip safety
Construction: Stainless steel (slide and frame)
Safety: Thumb, grip, firing pin block
Capacity: 7+1

I said "eventually" in the preceding paragraph intentionally. After about 200 rounds of range testing I disassembled the CCW to examine the LDA trigger system to find one leg of the ejector sheared from the frame. And yet it had functioned perfectly, without even the erratic ejection pattern one associates with this kind of damage. Off the pistol went to the Para Customer Service Center, popping back into my hands in less than a week with a new ejector in place. (I'm told faulty heat-treating was the perpetrator.) Several hundred rounds later, the CCW is still running strong.

Final Notes

I'd be lying if I said I was not impressed by my first experience with a Para LDA. This is quite a trigger system! And the CCW is quite a pistol. Perfectly sized, to me, for concealed carry, yet able to deliver the goods in the accuracy and reliability department.

Because of its potential I used the CCW in a local IDPA match, with no qualms about its compact dimensions. Of course, in competition I always shoot what I carry, and I only carry what I have confidence in. Guess that says it for the CCW!

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