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GUN TEST

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USA
LE WEAPONS

PARA DUO PART II

PARA

USA GI
EXPERT

»»» .45ACP

Modern reflection of what a duty 1911
SHOULD BE – without the
overdressed features!



By Eric R. Poole

HAVING a reputation hardened by decades of military service, there are many LE agencies that still depend on the 1911. In a world where many new to a uniform are just beginning to know the 1911, these freshmen find themselves choosing between numerous custom production pistols that loosely resemble the original and a budget-minded compromise. Representing everything that gave the 1911 its reputation is the new .45ACP GI Expert.

Going back to basics, Para's GI Expert is an entry level 1911. Like the original, it favors right-handed

shooters with the traditional low-profile thumb safety, slide lock lever and magazine release. Vertical serrations are only present at the rear of the slide's slabs and the sights are the standard fixed three-dots. Even the simple black polymer grips are lackluster, featuring the Para USA logo. It looks and feels like a combat pistol.

What is included doesn't stand out in appearance. The three-hole polymer trigger on our pistol breaks predictably after 3.5 pounds of pressure without creep. It's one of the biggest contributing factors to the positive reception from our test group of sheriff deputies. The grip

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Steve Woods photo



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PARA USA GI EXPERT .45ACP



The GI Expert features 3 white-dot sights
that are dovetailed in the slide.



Three-hole polymer trigger broke
without creep at 3.5 pounds.



Note the flat mainspring housing and the
no-frills checkered polymer grips.

safety is subtly contoured for the hammer but not too large. A lightweight skeletonized hammer strikes the firing pin reliably and an empty 8-round magazine drops onto a protective polymer bumper. The barrel fit is superb with the appropriate size barrel link, proper lug engagement and the correct relationship between the chamber and frame. The ejection port is lowered and flared for reliable ejection. With a frame and slide made of carbon steel and finished in Covert Black Para Kote, this pistol is a modern reflection of what many argue a 1911 should be.

RANGE TIME

Right out of the box, I performed a limited technical inspection of the GI Expert and observed light scratches on the barrel



The skeletonized hammer spur allows for
faster lock time and to prevent hammer bite.

SPECIFICATIONS

PARA USA GI EXPERT

Caliber: .45ACP • Barrel: 5 inches • OA Length: 8.5 inches • Weight: 39 ounces (empty)
Sights: Dovetail fixed, white 3-dot • Grips: Polymer • Action: SA
Finish: Covert Black Para Kote • Capacity: Two 8-shot mags • Price: \$599

hood and some wear on the controls and around the muzzle. Evidence suggests that my test sample had "fired a few shots." What's nice about this is that I didn't need to worry about issues that people commonly blame on a firearm's break-in.

Gathering a number of partial boxes, the deputies and I dumped leftover .45ACP cartridges into a single plastic bag. It's a little unorthodox (and a tad bit abusive) for a test but it would reveal whether variations in pressures, bullet weights and types would interrupt the Para's operation. What was in the bag? We found truncated bullets, ball, Hydra-Shoks, Golden Sabers, a few Silvertips and some questionable reloads. With a handful of surprises, I began

stuffing the magazine. I gave the honor of firing the first shot to a deputy who shot at a few steel plates on a target rack 15 yards away. Watching the pistol, the slide's return was noticeably different from shot to shot. I stepped up and continued the cycle. When the bag was empty, we had fired every shot without finding a squib load or experiencing any type of malfunction.

Moving on to accuracy, we put up Caldwell's Orange Peel 12-inch bull's-eye target for visual confirmation of hits 25 yards away. Loading a magazine with just 5 rounds of Winchester WinClean 185-grain cartridges, accuracy testing commenced from a Caldwell Pistolero handgun rest on a bench. Five rounds clustered together

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PARA USA GI EXPERT .45ACP



GI Expert has a premium stainless steel barrel and full metal bushing. Note the lack of a full-length guide rod.

with the center measuring just 0.50 of an inch to the right of center. The WinClean earned praise in its ability to punch perfect circles in the target for easy identification. The best group measured a very impressive 1.75 inches center-to-center and held an average of 2.75 inches after a 5-shot group. One aspect that went unappreciated during testing of the Winchester ammunition was the controllability. Follow-up shots were fast and accurate.

Loaded with Federal's 230-grain Law Enforcement Tactical HST, it took just one shot to realize this was a defense load. Steadily recovering after each shot, I was even more surprised to see the best group of the day result from the first 5-shot group fired with the Federal ammunition. The bullets were not kind to the paper as they ripped through the very center of the target and measured just 1.56 inches, a group rarely seen in testing service pistols. Four targets later, the group average had grown to a respectable 2.51 inches.

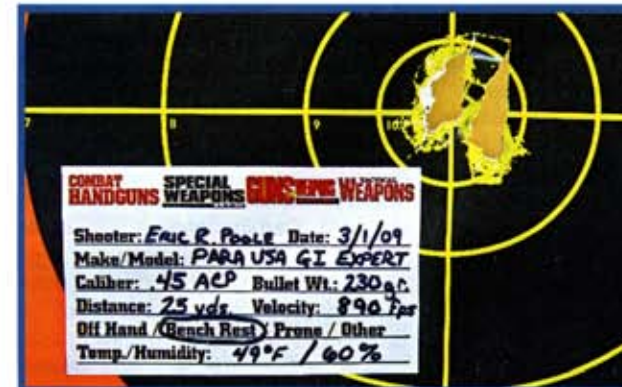
The GI Expert's sights are easy to find during recovery between shots and plain to see. Some deputies noted valid concerns about snagging the rear sight on their uniform. The sights are not staked and the dovetail cuts in the slide make it easy to find and swap in a set of low profile or night sights with the right sight tool. After clearing the holster, presentation was natural for some but a little unusual for those who had only carried (Please turn to page 95)

PARA USA GI EXPERT .45ACP

Continued from page 30

a Glock for duty. Unlike so many new introductions in the firearms industry, finding a specific type of holster or thigh rig for the GI Expert is easy.

During a thorough evaluation on the range, the only malfunction we experienced was with a slotted grip screw that backed out on occasion and became noticeably loose in the grip while shooting defensive ammunition. We should have used some Loctite on the threads and put the aggravation to rest. Lesson learned.



Federal's 230gr HST shot the best for the day with a group only 1.56 inches.

PERFORMANCE

PARA USA GI EXPERT .45ACP

Load	Velocity	ACCURACY	
		Best	Average
Federal 230 HST	890	1.56	2.51
Winchester 185 WinClean	910	1.75	2.74

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second (fps) by PACT chronograph, and accuracy in inches for 5-shot groups from 25 yards.



The GI Expert isn't an attempt by Para USA to duplicate the service pistols used in both World Wars, Korea and Vietnam. It is a high value 1911 ready for general issue that's absent of the overdressed features found on so many "custom" guns. There's no rail to dangle accessories from under the dust cover and nothing is too tight to cause functioning issues in filthy environments. This Para is fit for dependable service and has what it takes to

help obtain an expert badge on qualification day or decisively preserve a life in the line of duty.

For more information:

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PARA USA TTR 5.56mm

Continued from page 24

refers to the 55-grain TAP cartridge as the "Urban" load. It offers high velocity in shorter-barreled carbines. Featuring a polymer tip, it is a good choice when collateral risk is present but penetration is important. The 75-grain match quality TAP load is Hornady's heaviest TAP offering, well suited for LE sniper applications and barrels with a 1-in-7-inch to 1-in-9-inch twist. The 75-grain bullet penetrates deeper and transfers more energy to the target than any other TAP load in this caliber.

At 100 yards on paper, the Para TTR favored the 75-grain TAP load with an average 3-round group size measuring 1.69 inches. The best 75-grain group measured an impressive 1.13 inches using the Meproflight reflex sight and 3x magnifier. This group rivals many AR-style rifles tested in these pages with high-powered sniper scopes.

The Hornady 55-grain TAP load would serve this rifle best in close-range operations due to the terminal ballistics revealed in earlier gelatin tests. On paper at 100 yards, the

"Licensed by ZM Weaponry, the Para TTR uses a trademarked Delayed Impingement Gas System (DIGS) designed by Allan Zitta to get the shooter back on target **FASTER** than any other rifle in its class."

groups averaged 2.78 inches with the best group cutting holes just 1.38 inches apart.

When analyzing these targets, the most interesting find was discovering only a minimal impact shift at 100 yards. With the lighter 55-grain bullet flying higher and to the right, the difference between the two averaged 1.28 inches of elevation and just 1.62 inches of windage.

Both the Para TTR and the Armatrac 150-round CL-MAG functioned flawlessly with no hi-cups or jams of any type. Since the military ammunition was already pre-loaded in clips, loading the Armatrac magazine to full capacity was simplified with the use of an NcSTAR speed loader. Blasting through 150 rounds of hard-to-

find 5.56mm NATO was a rare and satisfying experience but the free-floated barrel radiated heat in protest. What almost went unnoticed was the absence of felt recoil, a product of the unique operating system and added weight of the balanced 150-round magazine.

FINAL NOTES

The Para USA TTR isn't the wood-stocked M1 Carbine carried into battle but it does possess some similar handling qualities required by today's law enforcement. Even fitted with a realistic set of options, the Para TTR carbine delivers public defenders the tactical edge.

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