

Countless rounds fired ... untold man-eons of Research and Development ... the inevitable, relentless post-competition acrimony. After a long, twisting road, the United States military has formally selected only the third competitive service pistol in the history of our Great Republic: the M17. According to proponents, the new pistol represents a quantum advance in combat handgun design.

The pistol design competition called for a "Modular Handgun System." Uncle Sam

wanted a single adaptable chassis which, mixed and matched to appropriate accessories, could form a full-sized service pistol as well as a compact concealable carry gun. Where most of the other competitors just dusted off their civilian designs, SIG set out to produce a new and legitimately modular system.

The M17 pistol started as their stock P320. What makes this gun unusual is its removable fire control assembly. This stainless steel component is the controlled

bit, complete with serial number. Interchangeable polymer grip modules change the gun's proportions, while slides of two different lengths make the gun longer or shorter. The M17 slide has its top deck cut for a red dot optic and there are racking grooves fore and aft. The polymer grip module is lightly stippled, and the front of the dust cover is naturally railed for accessories. There are grabby dimples at the base of the grip should you ever need to yank out a magazine.

SIG M17 9MM

**A DONE DEAL DONE WELL:
THE U.S. MILITARY'S THIRD SERVICE PISTOL**



Channeling his inner Massad Ayoob, Will discovered the M17 really comes into its own in rapid-fire. As a general-issue military handgun, the M17's historical gravitas is assured.



The M17's dust cover is railed for accessories such as this Streamlight TLR-1 — even the color matches!

The magazine catch is single-side but reversible, while the safety and slide release are replicated perfectly on both sides. The slide catch is surprisingly small but most of us train to release the slide manually by snatching it backwards these days. Magazines carry either 17 or 21 rounds and the dovetailed SIGLITE front sight gleams nicely in the darkness.

Disassembly requires neither tools nor a

previous M9, this is my favorite. The break is sharp, and the reset nicely abbreviated.

THE ROAD TO THE M17

John Moses Browning contrived the .45 ACP round in 1905. Based on this new round, he birthed the M1911 pistol to enhance the potential stopping power of this new combination.

It had become obvious the “day in the

subsequently earned its place as the producer of America's first handgun to be selected via a head-to-head competition.

The M1911 became a symbol of general American awesomeness the world over. Things continued status quo through two World Wars, several police actions, and countless hundreds of thousands of soldiers. However, by the 1970s it was time to do it all over again.

“Equal part battle implement and talisman, the humble handgun has an impact well beyond its modest price and limited combat role.”

pull of the trigger. Most armed professionals say the trigger pull disassembly “thing” is a training issue and not a big deal. However, I hang out with a lot of cops and gun nerds. So far I am up to five acquaintances who've had accidental discharges which wouldn't have happened had their weapons been equipped with a manual safety — or not had the “pull trigger for disassembly” feature.

And speaking of trigger pulling, the pull of the striker-fired M17 is simply outstanding. Of all the sundry improvements over the

sun” for the military wheelgun was fading. While scads of companies dipped their toes in the water, only Colt, Savage and Germany's DWM really played to win.

DWM ultimately produced three copies of their P-08 Luger in .45 ACP. These were the only period .45-caliber Lugers produced in Germany. Possession of one of these three guns today would likely set a guy up for life. After DWM inexplicably dropped out, Savage and Colt fought like drunken chimps until Colt's M1911 prevailed. Colt

BERETTA INTERIM

The M1911 was showing its age. The versions I was first issued back in the day rattled when you shook them. As a result, in 1979 the Joint Services Small Arms Project set out with the mission to select an appropriate replacement. FN, HK, Beretta, Colt, S&W, Star and Walther came to the party. Beretta walked away with the prize.

The M9 was undeniably safer. The Beretta sported a single-action/double-action trigger

Left to right: M1911A1, SIG M17 and Beretta M9. All were selected for general issue to the US military as the result of competitive trials.





The M17 is an evolutionary step of the SIG P320. A SIGLITE insert keeps the front sight glowing in dim light and there are cocking serrations front and back.



Operator controls: the M17 slide release is surprisingly small but most shooters "slingshot" the slide to release it.



The safety and slide release are perfectly mirrored on the left. The visible number is serialized stainless steel fire control assembly.



"Modular" defined: The stainless steel M17 chassis can be dropped into various accessories to build totally different weapons.

as well as a bilateral slide-mounted manual safety lever. The open-slide architecture was always touted as a boon to reliability but I never bought into it myself. Regardless, I used an M9 operationally for eight years and cannot recall a single stoppage among the countless examples I encountered on military qualification ranges.

The 9mm chambering of the M9 was a controversial decision. Purists decried the cartridge's power as sub-optimal but the gun did pack 15+1 onboard. I have seen quite a few folks shot with 9mm pistols; while there are indeed spunkier handgun loadings, not one of those people looked happy.

The M9's aluminum frame cut back on the weight and the ameliorated recoil did make it easier to manage for those soldiers who weren't really serious *pistoleros*. The magazine catch was reversible but I never saw anybody actually reverse it. There was a problem with slides exploding early on but a mid-production change fixed the issue.

I shared a sleeping bag with an M9 on numerous occasions. While I would have preferred my gorgeous bride, the Beretta always seemed like decent company to me. I could hit with it well enough to score expert and I liked the way it rode in my hand. With military use, then in the hands of Mel Gibson in *Letal Weapon* and Bruce Willis in *Die Hard*, the M9 sold like hotcakes.

TRIGGER TIME

GIs were not supposed to carry their M1911A1 pistols in Condition One (round in the chamber, hammer back, safety on). However, my wife's grandfather toted one with a hot chamber from North Africa all the way up Italy in WWII. Given how tough the guy was, I always suspected anyone who might have found it objectionable was likely too intimidated to say anything. Recoil was indeed noteworthy and the 1911 was, relatively speaking, a hoar anchor to tote.

The double-action/single-action trigger on the M9 made it tough to shoot to the same point of aim consistently. The sights



All three U.S. military handguns shoot plenty straight from a rest. These 10-meter groups demonstrate comparable performance.



Disassembly requires no tools and can be accomplished in moments, a great feature for "rustic" field conditions.

sported a simple painted dot, while the ample grip and modest cartridge kept things pleasant. For its era the M9 was a fine handgun.

The new M17 is easier to run and safer than both of its predecessors, with the smooth consistent trigger being 90 percent of the equation. Empty magazines just blast out of the magwell when you press the button. The grip is hands-down the best of the three. The overhung architecture of the slide keeps the center of gravity well forward for minimal muzzle flip and quick follow up shots. All three guns shot plenty straight from a rest but I shot faster with the M17 under all conditions tested.

HATERS GONNA HATE

GLOCK fanboys are almost as bitter

about the SIG M17 as Hillary's acolytes are over the fact Donald Trump takes his mail at the White House. However, the manual safety on the G19 MHS submitted for the trials was obviously an afterthought and precious little about the gun is actually modular. Haters are going to hate regardless, but they'll have to get over it.

A new M17 costs Uncle Sam a cool \$207 but it will set the unwashed masses back substantially more. However, I suspect SIG could have just given the guns to the government and still made a profit considering how many geeks like me will simply have to have one. Our local cops are trading in their .40-caliber GLOCK 22s for new SIG 9mm P320s as I type these words. I suspect this might be happening in other places as well. An American grunt packing your particular

brand of iron is the best advertising a gun company could ever contrive.

A service pistol is a big deal. A soldier's handgun is arguably his or her most intimate tool. Equal part battle implement and talisman, the humble handgun has an impact well beyond its modest price and limited combat role.

I toted my new M17 underneath my scrubs for a couple of weeks at work. The gun is big without being bulky and runs like a scalded ape. Cool, suave, mean and sleek, the new SIG M17 has indeed earned its place in American military history.

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