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By CHUCK TAYLOR

For more than three years, the combat shooting public has eagerly awaited the appearance of the Bren Ten pistol. Chambered for the 10mm auto cartridge, the brainchild of Jeff Cooper and manufacturer Dornhaus and Dixon Enterprises has indeed been a long time coming and has been fraught with countless delays due to production problems and failures. To the degree, in fact, that many who displayed enthusiasm initially for the gun have found themselves at first puzzled and then genuinely annoyed at the seemingly endless postponements of delivery with their accompanying excuses.

Everyone who knows anything about the project—and, unfortunately, many who do not—have espoused all kinds of reasons as to why this situation came to exist, none of which are very complimentary and therefore will not be reiterated here. Personally, it is my own opinion that those concerned with the Bren Ten project simply failed to realize and understand just how complex

and difficult building from scratch a completely new, untried firearm design can be. To those who have voiced to me their unbridled irritation and sometimes a fury that borders on actually being irrational, I can only say that I do *not* agree that the project is a "ripoff". My differences with Cooper are well known and I'm not even acquainted with Messrs. Dornhaus and Dixon, so I have no personal interests to protect or involvements to perpetuate. I just can't see any valid reason why or how anyone would stand to profit from such a thing and, more importantly, know that Cooper himself would not involve himself in such a scheme, knowingly or otherwise.

I feel instead that my responsibility as a weapons/tactics consultant and journalist is to examine first the theory, then the actual practicality of the Bren Ten and its cartridge, then to comment upon its assets and liabilities relative to its manufacturer's claims; no more, no less. I also feel it necessary to state that I write this text both with apprehension and the hope that those who read it will understand that I have rendered it with no malice towards Cooper

or anyone else. In this same vein, I ask that the reader remember that I, too, am a respected professional in the field with a reputation for honesty, objectivity and expertise and regard my comments only in that light. In return for this trust and courtesy, I will try very hard to be worthy of the same.

First, let's look at the theory of the Bren Ten and the 10mm cartridge. While it might surprise many of you, the 10mm is *not* new, actually dating back to about 1964 and the first attempt to rebuild the Browning P-35 (High Power) to chamber the largest possible cartridge (read this increased stopping power without a major redesign and subsequent increase in weapon size and weight. In so doing, an interesting repetition of history was enacted because the 9mm parabellum, the cartridge for which the P-35 was originally chambered, was born in exactly the same way shortly after the turn of the century!

The first handgun chambered for the "9-para" was, of course, the Luger, which

Continued on page 42

THE BREN TEN:

SWAT Pistol Evaluation

Make: Bren Ten

Model: Service

Caliber: 10mm

Overall Length: 8.68 inches/217mm

Thickness: 1.1 inches/303mm

Height: 5.5 inches/138mm

Weight, Unloaded: 40 oz/1.8 kg.

Weight, Loaded: 46.5 oz/2.1kg

Barrel

Length: 4.8 inches/122mm

Twist: Right Hand

No. Lands & Grooves: 5

Sights

Front

Type: ramped, high visibility, satisfactory

Width: .155 inches/3.8 mm

Serrated: No

Insert: Yes — white dot, non-glowing

Rear

Type: fixed, high visibility, fragile

Width: .157 inches/3.9 mm

Illuminated: Yes — dual white dot

Trigger

Type: wide, smooth

Weight: 6¼ lb/14.9kg. SA/14.0 lb/30.1 kg. DA

Letoff: muddy

Hammer

Type: Bobbed

Width: .317 inches/7.9 mm

Stocks

Design: Satisfactory

Fit: Satisfactory

Finish: Satisfactory

General Fit

Metal to Metal: Satisfactory

To Metal: Satisfactory

Finish: Blue/Stainless

Magazine

Type: Detachable box

Capacity: 10 rounds

Bushing, if any: Solid

Accuracy, 25 meters: 4.0 inches/100 mm

General Reliability: Unsatisfactory

Human Engineering

Handling Qualities: Satisfactory

Sharp Edges: Non, excellent



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COLT .45



had originally been chambered for the 7.65mm parabellum. From field trails and combat experience, it was ascertained that the 7.65 was a poor manstopper unless substantial bone was struck. In order to prevent instant obsolescence of the tens of thousands of Lugers already in proliferation, a program was undertaken to find the

largest diameter bullet which the basic 7.65 case would accommodate. The result was the 9mm. Thus, a two-fold goal was achieved; first, while not exactly satisfactory as a manstopper, the 9mm was a good deal better than the 7.65 and, second, a total redesign of the Luger pistol was avoided. Pretty neat, eh?

Public interest in the 10mm P-35 was minimal and, aside from a few obscure comments upon it in the gun press, it pass-

ed into relative oblivion until about five years ago. At that time, I was serving as the Operations Officer for Cooper's API and relations between us were quite cordial. On a number of occasions, we discussed in detail the conceptual potential for a cartridge somewhere in between the 9mmP and .45 ACP that would function in a small, handy gun like the Browning or the then-new Czech CZ-75. The CZ is a neat pistol, comfortable to hold, easy to carry, accurate and with good human engineering, even if it does feature a dual DA/SA mode of operation. At least the operator has the option of how to carry/use the gun. This is, theoretically, the best of both worlds because police administrators who fear the "cocked and locked" Condition One carry of the .45 are placated by the "safer" carry mode of the DA auto. Yet,

BREN TEN



at the same time, the gun can also be carried and operated in the more efficient SA mode if the operator desires. The CZ-75 is compact too, and seems to be a better potential home for the 10mm than even the P-35.

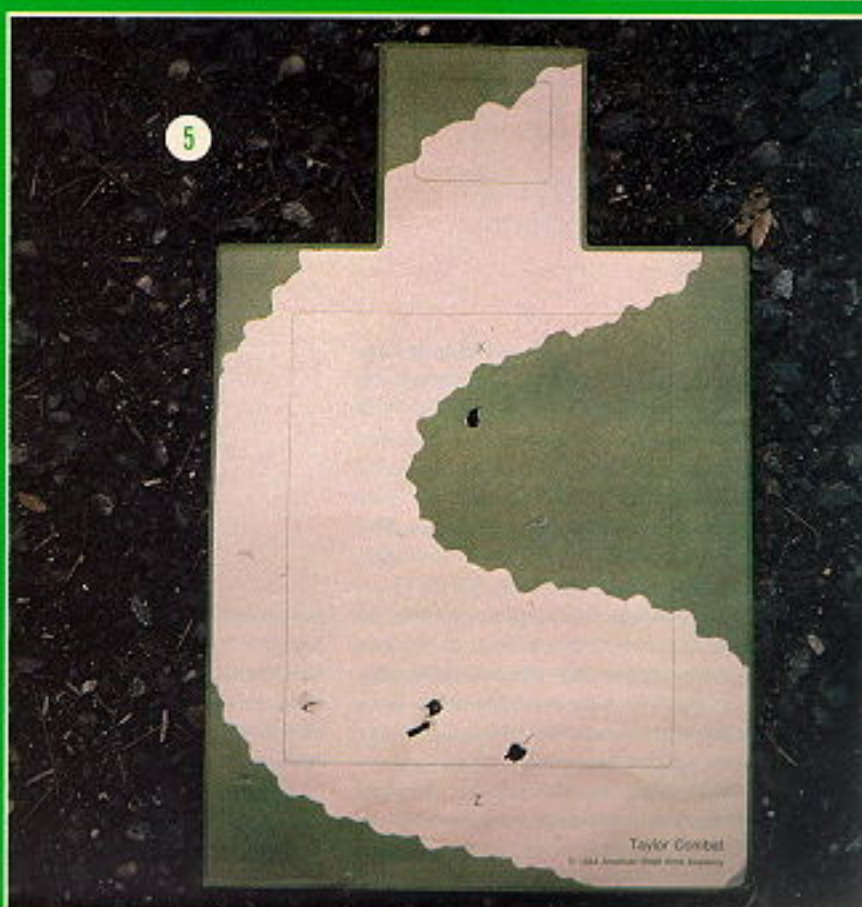
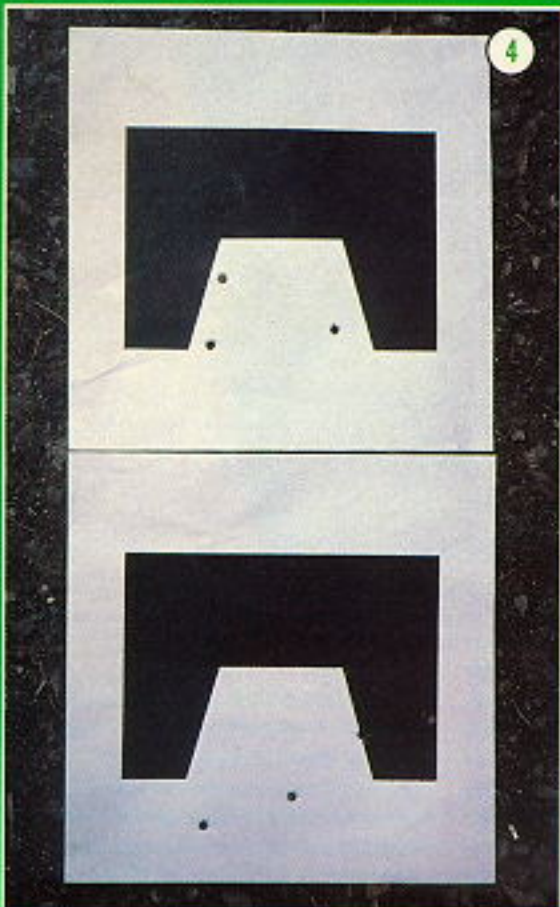
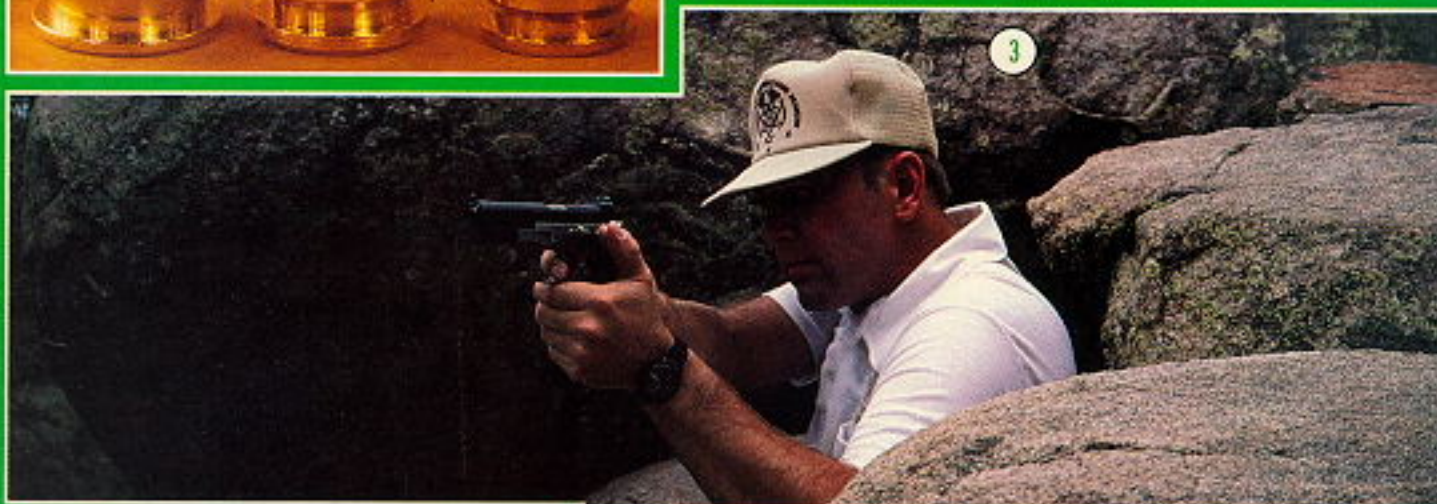
I stressed to Jeff that I felt that the "new" 10mm gun should retain the compact, trim configuration of the P-35 or CZ-75 to avoid direct competition with the Colt M1911 series, which had, to say the least, a formidable following including the both of us. If such a gun could be produced and sold economically enough, I felt that sufficient public interest might be generated. On the other hand, I also felt strongly that if such a pistol were made as large as the Colt, it would be "out of its realm", particularly in view of the entirely theoretical adequacy of the 10mm cartridge upon

which it depends as its major selling point. Another point I made in the discussions was the concept of a reversible thumb safety in deference to the increasing numbers of left-handed shooters in the world. To all of these thoughts, Jeff was very receptive.

Although I was not subsequently involved in what eventually became the Bren Ten project, I operated API until September, 1980, at which time I resigned to carry on my own endeavors. The finalization of

the concept and the involvement between Cooper, Dornhaus and Dixon followed. The rest is public knowledge.

Several years "down the road" when I saw the first Bren Ten prototype, I was surprised to see that it was so large, a little bigger even than the ubiquitous M1911 it is intended to replace. I felt then (and still do)



(Photo opposite page)

1) 10mm auto cartridge, center, spans the theoretical gap between the 9mm parabelum and venerable .45 ACP. At present, it suffers from an extreme lack of availability, excessive cost per round, and an initial loading which exhibits all indications of being a bit too hot!

2) Note large blemish in blue in front of ejection port.

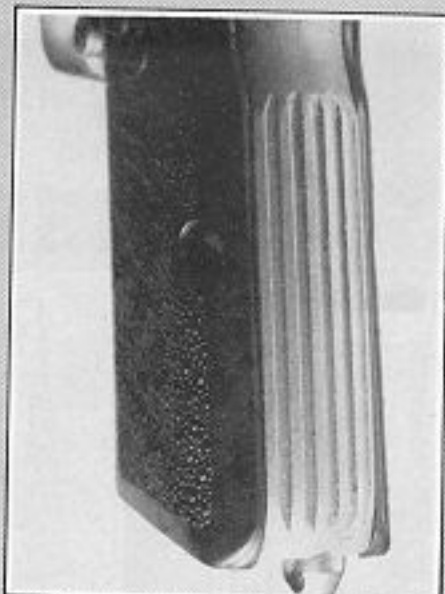
3) Author during field trials of production 'service' model Bren Ten. Found that functional reliability of test gun was not as hoped and that large, heavy mass of slide so far above hand causes excessive muzzle flip.

4) Intrinsic accuracy of Bren Ten is adequate, but not superior. Average group size measured about 4 inches at 25 meters, quite satisfactory for combat.

5) Vaunted penetration potential of 10mm cartridge failed to materialize when both 9mm parabelum and .45 ACP penetrated fully as well as 10mm against test automobile. This means that, as always, theory must be judged by reality instead of the other way around. The 10mm is still a pistol cartridge and, as such, is still subject to the limitations of pistol cartridges. Out of five shots fired at this target (seated in driver's seat) of test vehicle though driver's door from 7 meters, only three penetrated, one of which did so only in fragments. Another keyholed. This performance is, for all intents and purposes, the same as can be expected of the 9mmP, .357 Magnum, .38 Special, .44 Special and .45 ACP, unless special ammunition is utilized.

that the biggest asset of the gun/cartridge combination had been lost. The result is, unfortunately, that the prototype and its current production counterparts have a slide mass of considerable size, located too high above the firing hand. This, in turn, translates into accentuated muzzle flip, something about which all who have fired the gun in, my presence, have commented with alacrity. I also found that the gun feels somewhat awkward in the average-sized hand, due to its large frame. This is the direct antithesis of the original concept and both the P-35 and CZ-75 pistols.

Thus, I question the need for the 10mm cartridge, at all, in a gun of such bulk whereas I would laud it in its proper configuration. My testing, witnessed by a dozen knowledgeable shooters who carry a gun for a living, has determined that the 10mm



Backstrap of Bren Ten is nicely grooved to enhance firing grip.



Magazine well features an adequate 45 degree bevel to allow easier speed loading. However, the legitimacy of speed loading in itself placed aside, the pronounced edge of the bevel should have been rounded off or, better still, the bevel could have been 60, instead of 45 degrees to allow maximum benefit.



Author found that test gun would fire with slide as much as 1/16th inch out of battery. Consultations with gunsmith disclosed that while locking lugs were not actually disengaged, pressure upon them was eased and engagement surfaces were beginning to separate at this stage. Perhaps this isn't actually dangerous—those consulted split their views—but, it is disconcerting.

Itself is ballistically equivalent to a slightly attenuated .41 magnum. Yet, because it lacks the bullet mass to balance its increased (1200 fps claimed) bullet velocity, it fails to deliver more usable "punch" than the .45, except in the purely theoretical (muzzle energy) sense that we all know to be a moot point.

In addition, I find the 200 grain flatnose Norma loading that is all one can obtain as this is written, to be more than a little on the "hot" side, displaying flattened, cratered primers, numerous failures to extract and chambering reamer marks upon the fired cases. A further detriment is the fact that the ammo is very expensive, almost a dollar a shot, and available only from Dornhaus and Dixon. Back in earlier discussions pertaining to the 10mm, I stated to Cooper my preference for keeping projectile velocities down to around 900-950 fps to enhance control, prevent over-penetration and yet sacrifice little in effective stopping power. He agreed at the time. Along the way, though, the concept appears to have been cast aside, perhaps to make the "short form" figures look good.

The reams of advertising "hype" generated on the Bren Ten and its cartridge are no more surprising or vehement than that distributed by anyone else who is trying to sell something. Business, after all is business, and for this reason Dornhaus and Dixon should not be judged too harshly. Remember, please, that it is as typical as the fact that we often find that many of the claims to superiority by manufacturers and those who inevitably write about their products are invalid. For instance, one writer glowingly described the Bren Ten/10mm as being able to knock down steel plates that the .45 could not. In front of a dozen qualified witnesses, I attempted to duplicate this feat, finding instead that the reverse was true. The .45 consistently demonstrated more so-called "knockdown" ability than the 10mm at typical combat handgun ranges. Surprising? Hardly. It is only a graphic reconfirmation of Hatcher's theory that bullet mass and cross-sectional area, not velocity, are the critical factors. Mass is inextricably linked with bullet weight as well as velocity, you know, and, as stated amusingly in the TV margarine commercial, "It's not nice to fool Mother Nature!" In fact, it simply cannot be done.

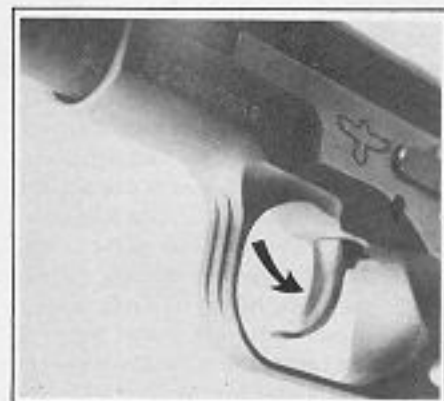
As for the gun itself, I must say that I was very disappointed, and not only because it was so large and clumsy in my hand. The profusion of casting/machine marks found all over it are disquieting, so much so that I felt obligated to contact two of my associates with access to a production Bren Ten to see if this was the norm. The answer came back an emphatic disconcerted "yes". Moreover, their reactions to the gun's performance mirrored mine.

From the bench, the pistol prints groups that average about four inches; not spectacular, but certainly good enough for a service gun. (My own criteria for this is simply that the weapon must be capable of placing all of its shots in a man's chest at 50 meters and this is far better than anyone

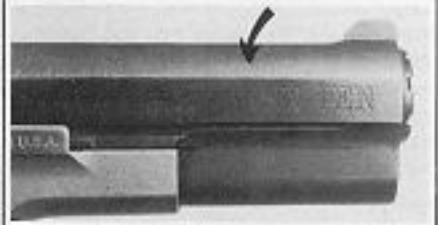
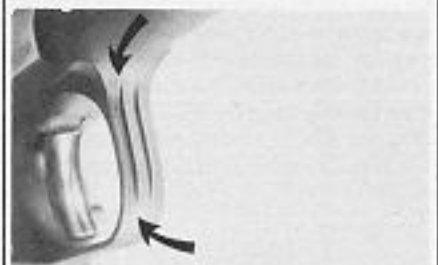
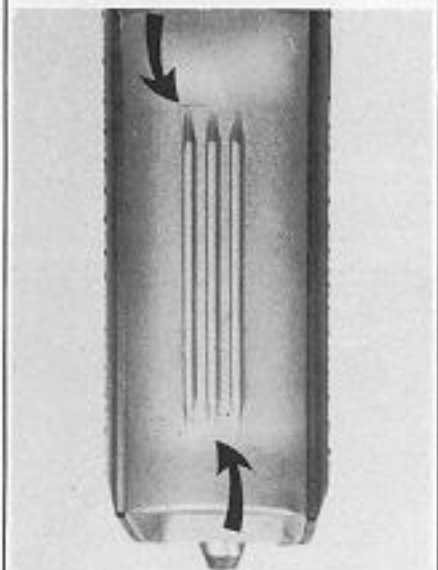
can actually shoot under the stress of real combat.) What *does* concern me greatly is the 10 percent-plus rate of failures to eject that I experienced because reliability is without question the most important characteristic of a weapon upon which one bets his life. In any event, I see this as a serious problem requiring immediate rectification.

These, then, form the nucleus of my reactions to the Bren Ten 10mm pistol. In reviewing my notes, I find them to be moderately negative and perhaps this is misleading. The Bren Ten is not another "Jammomatic" such as the old LES P-18; not by a long shot. However, I am very much disappointed in it because its concept as originally created, has immense potential and I am sorry to see it again unfulfilled. The more one handles the Bren Ten, the more it becomes apparent that it is a weapon that its creators have tried to make into too many things. And, in so doing, it accomplishes nothing that already existing arms of various categories do not already accomplish. It has too many entirely theoretical features that are untried and some that are known to be invalid in the first place. The clumsy feel of the gun, its "gadgety" appearance and poor finish; its firing pin block, its 6.75 lb. SA and 14 lb. DA trigger and its stormy history to date, all indicate that somewhere along the line, somebody forgot the very heart of the combat handgun—simplicity—and instead got sidetracked with complexity. As such, the Bren Ten represents what Cooper himself has often labelled as an "ingenious solution to a non-existent problem" and is hardly "combat ready", as claimed, right from the box. For a price of about \$500, I expect much, much more than this from both the pistol and the cartridge (which, by the way, penetrates no better on vehicular targets than the 9mmP, .45, .357 magnum or .44 Special!).

As an effort to find something better, the



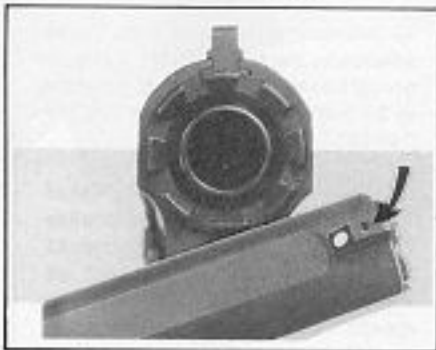
Trigger is too wide to allow truly efficient single or double-action manipulation. It is surprising to see this on the Bren Ten because it philosophically contradicts weapon consultant, Jeff Cooper, completely.



Design flaws aside, the most displeasing thing about the production Bren Ten is its poor finish. A multitude of casting/machine marks are evident all over the weapon. While certainly not an indication of functional reliability, these should not be evident in a pistol priced as high as the Bren Ten.



An interesting feature of the pistol is the ability to change the thumb safety from the left to the right side. This is a boon to left-handers and long overdue. However, note infamous 'see instructional manual before firing' stamping below. In author's opinion, this detracts greatly from the gun as does a similar warning stamped in the top of the slide in front of the rear sight.



Front sight of Bren Ten is large, well-ramped and easily seen at speed. Unfortunately, the theory of having the front sights being easily interchangeable by simply unscrewing the muzzle bushing failed the test of reality and the sight thus had to be pinned at the factory. This should have been detected and rectified much earlier in the weapon's research and development program.

Bren Ten is worth noting, but as an attempt at producing a handgun that is genuinely superior to the Colt .45, I'm afraid that it falls very, very short. Perhaps someday the original concept of the 10mm auto-pistol will be again resurrected and developed to its full potential. I sincerely hope so, which might surprise those who think that I am dogmatic because I support what I know to *work* instead of "progress" solely for its own sake.

But, until that day comes, I'll stay with the .45 auto. It's not perfect, not by any means but, as the best available compromise between stopping power, weapon controllability, human engineering and functional reliability, it remains way, way ahead of everything else. I'm not one given generally to making predictions, but I'll make this one: The Bren Ten will never win, all

Continued on page 66



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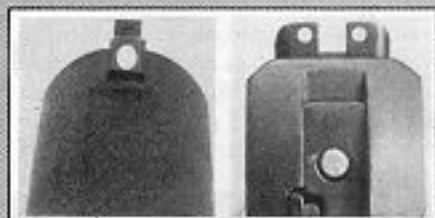
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BREN TEN

Continued from page 44



For those who prefer illuminated sights, a white, three-dot system is featured. Author is against all such devices on the grounds that they are unnecessary and confuse normal eyes at speed, thus increasing sight picture acquisition time, but feels also that for those with vision problems, three dot pattern is the best compromise.



Crossbolt type firing pin lock is unnecessary and presents a potential hazard in that it is easily activated operator's knowledge during field carry. In a combat gun, this could be the cause of a serious, perhaps terminal, problem. Note also machine marks in top of slide above safety bar and in front of rear sight. These and a multitude of other similar flaws in finish mar the appearance of the gun.



Slide release and other projecting parts are all nicely de-horned to prevent injury to skin and clothing; an excellent feature. Sadly, thumb safety is located too high to allow comfortable manipulation by firing thumb, due partly to the fact that the extension of the tab itself is too short, preventing any but the longest of thumbs from efficiently utilizing it.

other things being equal, against the .45 on the street, battlefield or IPSC firing range. A big statement and I fully realize it, but I make it nonetheless.

Naturally, only time will tell and I, among others, will certainly be watching.*