

# PERFECT CARRY 1911?

## REPUBLIC FORGE MAY HAVE CREATED THE ULTIMATE .38 SUPER

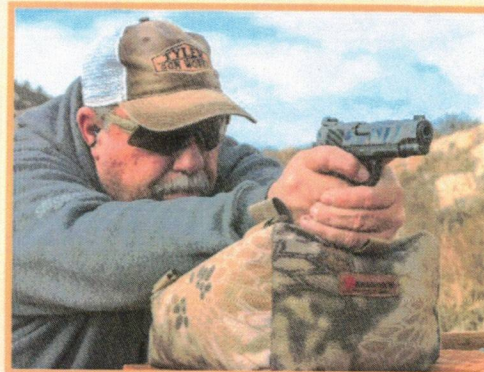
BY DAVE BAHDE

I have been carrying a 1911 for more than three decades, whether on duty as an officer, off duty, in SWAT gear or as a concealed carry holder. Given my familiarity, it remains my favorite carry pistol. Most were all steel, some in .45 ACP with the majority in 10mm. There's nothing wrong with the .45 ACP, but the 10mm performed so much better through media (cars, walls, doors, glass) while shooting flat at range and hitting hard. My go-to pistol for places where range may be an issue, such as large public areas like malls, theatres or outside events is a Custom Delta Elite. Its heavy though, and lightweight 10mm pistols (1911 or otherwise) are few and far between. A few were made, and fewer with alloy frames. I really wanted a lightweight 1911 using the standard 4.25-inch, Commander-length barrel chambered in something with the same

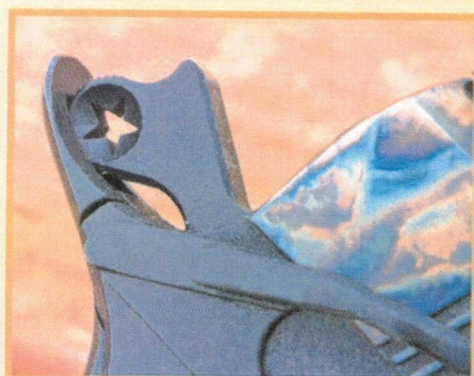
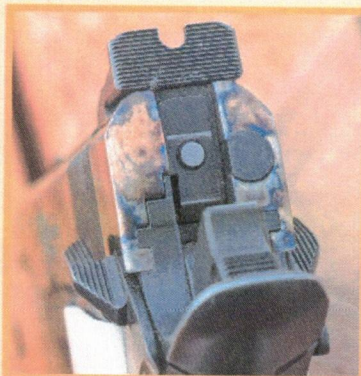
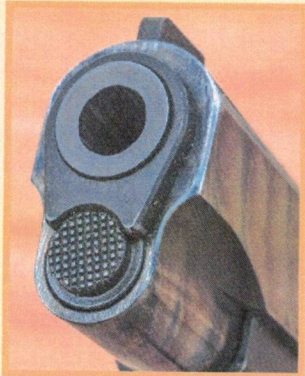
basic characteristics of the 10mm. The older I get the more that's the case, and it looks like I found it in the tried-and-true .38 Super.

### ► THE OTHER 9MM

This is no newcomer, as the .38 Super was introduced in 1929 as a high-velocity round to work in the 1911 pistol. Prior to the introduction of the .357 in 1934, it was one of the few .38-caliber rounds capable of penetrating car doors and other hard targets. Early variants developed from the .38 ACP were speedy for the day at 1,050 fps using a 130-grain bullet. When a barrel head spaced on the case mouth (not the rim), the .38 Super Auto was making closer to 1,300 fps. Modern loads from companies like Doubletap Ammunition safely bump that up to 1,350 fps with a modern 125-grain Controlled Expansion (JHP) load, and 1,450 fps









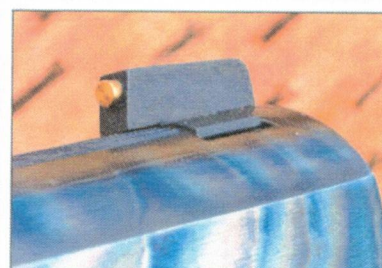
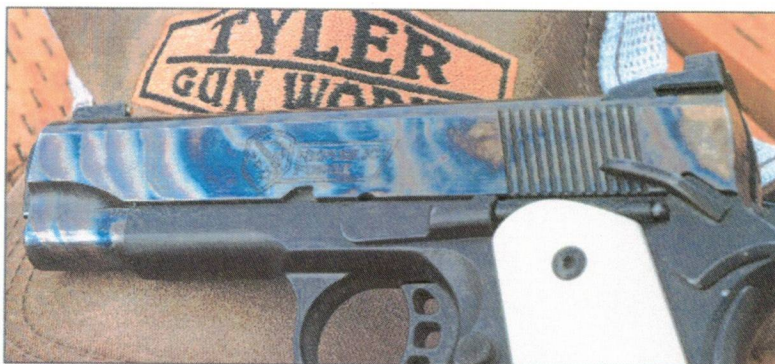
using Barnes 115-grain TACX-P bullets.

While not quite 10mm, it is softer shooting and does not require a steel receiver. Modern bullets make it an excellent self-defense load. Designed for use in a single stack 1911, they are reliable without a need to shop magazines. For me, it is about the perfect cartridge for concealed carry allowing me 10+1 rounds in a high-velocity pistol that shoots flat, hits hard but can be easily controlled in a lightweight frame.

### ► LIGHTWEIGHT COMMANDER

Over the last year or so, I had done some extensive testing of a Republic Forge Long Slide 10mm 1911. It proved reliable, deadly accurate and very comfortable to shoot, even with hunting loads, which is its purpose. While attending a media event for Republic Forge, they asked me to specify a pistol of my choice for some more coverage. Timing being about perfect, my personal pick for the perfect carry pistol was born, a lightweight Commander chambered in .38 Super with a matching 9mm barrel for practice.

Republic Forge remains one of the only truly American-built 1911 pistols available. They take this seriously. Everything that goes into their pistols is American-made and built on machines made in the United States. They start with steel or alloys mined, then forged in the U.S. to their specifications. Every part is made here, then fit by hand one pistol at a time by a single gunsmith. They can be Cerakoted or feature the nicest and most iconic case coloring by Tyler Gun Works in Texas. As a family-owned and focused business that started in a small shack made of wood, they are doing things no one else has done with case coloring by developing a process that creates the look without the hardening process, and their work is flawless. In fact, the owner, Bobby Tyler, will not let anything out the door that is less than perfect, whether it's case coloring or bluing. The result is a stunning pistol that flat out runs.



Case coloring by Tyler Gun Works makes the Republic Forge 1911 a thing of beauty. The rear sight is a Republic Forge carry style serrated in black, and the front sight has a gold bead.

The lower receiver on this 1911 is forged from aluminum alloy and then coated with PVC for a tuff finish. The frontstrap is cut high and checkered with a matching mainspring housing. The pistol features a standard-length carry trigger tuned to 4 to 4.5 pounds and an extended beavertail with their Texas Star hammer. The carry mag well is beveled to match the receiver with a mild carry treatment with a standard backstrap. Stocks for hard use are a nice set of Cherry G10 while a set of my Ivory panels are used for special occasions. Internals, slide stop, magazine release and safeties (ambidextrous) are all made from tool steel. The slide is forged steel case colored with no front cocking serrations. The rear sight is a Republic Forge carry style, serrated in the back with no dots or tritium and is ledged for unconventional slide manipulation. The top is grooved and lines up perfectly with the gold bead front sight. Barrels are both Kart, fully

supported using a standard guide rod, return spring (caliber matched) and barrel bushing. Tripp Research Cobra Magazines were supplied (two each) for both the 9mm and .38 Super.

### ► LEATHER CARRY

This is my primary carry pistol, so the Simply Rugged Sourdough leather holster was used almost exclusively IWB along with a matching belt, magazine and flashlight carrier. It's turned out to be one of the most comfortable rigs ever used, and that includes some of the best in the leather business. Not only does it look great, but it carries this LW 1911 like it's not there. Even full-sized steel guns carry with no back pain, which is rare these days for me. It has been on my hip with few exceptions since the day it arrived and was initially tested for function.

Magazines for the .38 Super are either the Tripp Research provided or Wilson Combat Elite. Both are among the best



you can buy and the most proven in general. Several 9mm magazines were used including Tripp Research, Wilson Combat, Mec-Gar and Metalform.

► **ON THE RANGE**

Although the 9mm barrel was created for practice, all but a few rounds of testing were completed in .38 super—its primary configuration. Because it will not be carried in 9mm, it was only tested for function during a CQP class. Accuracy was excellent with my best group coming from Doubletap's 125-grain Controlled Expansion load. It was clustered into about an inch or so with four of the five rounds touching. It's the best I can shoot a pistol. Everything was accurate through that Kart barrel with nothing exceeding 2 inches at 25 yards. Groups were fired standing behind a bench using a bag as a rest, making it about as real as these things get. Given its job, similar groups were fired using nothing more than different portions of my truck as a rest. Hood, door jam, bumpers and most anything that could be used. Misses on a 6-inch round steel were few and far between. Lining up on the silhouette at 50 yards, it clustered 10 rounds of the Doubletap 115-grain Barnes TACX-P into the size of my first. That's not unexpected accuracy from a hand-built custom 1911, but a great pleasure, nonetheless.

Reliability was excellent, even with the hottest loads. Most range testing was completed using Sig Sauer's 125-grain FMJ at 1,200 fps. While running the



The author shot his best groups using Doubletap's Controlled Expansion round.

Scrambler at Gunsite, it tagged almost everything, even the targets out close to 100 yards. Running it on the large tree it was solid and comfortable with zero malfunctions using both the Wilson Combat and Tripp Research magazines. Several rapid-fire magazine dumps were completed without a single issue, and it is fast—very fast.

Recoil is manageable, but you will notice it's no 9mm, even with +P loads. But it is very controllable. When firing 10 rounds off-hand at 7 yards as fast as the trigger could be pulled, it kept them all inside the diameter of my hand. During slow-fire, it created a large hole. Running Doubletap's 147-grain FMJ was very comfortable. Maybe the most comfortable was the Winchester 125-grain Silver Tip—a bit slow compared to the rest but it ran well. Buffalo Bore's 115-grain Barnes TAC-XP load at 1,450 fps was just as accurate

and controllable. Sig Sauer's 125-grain V-Crown at 1,200 fps matched their FMJ load perfectly. Fired side by side, you could not tell the difference. All around, it's a solid carry/practice combination.

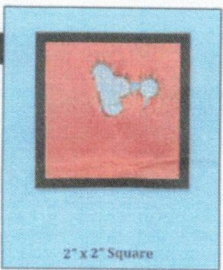
► **BOTTOM LINE**

Normally there is something for me to take issue with but not this time, not in .38 Super. Any issues were experienced with the 9mm, typical of most every 9mm 1911 tested. It fed the Barnes 115-grain TAC-XP load perfectly along with the Remington and Hornady Critical Duty. Wide hollow points like the Sig Sauer V-Crown were less reliable while FMJ loads were no issue. This should be no surprise, as it was built by hand to my specification. Republic Forge prides itself on attention to detail, and this was an excellent example of that mindset. After a few months of carry, it's dinged up a bit, but the gorgeous case coloring remains. It's a very striking pistol to look at.

This is not a pistol for everyone, as retail is in the \$4K range with both barrels but well within the norm for a hand-built custom 1911 pistol. Republic Forge is starting to build a name in this market and with good reason. They will build pretty much anything you want and deliver in months, maybe even weeks, but never years. Along with case coloring, they can have them custom engraved and offer fancy wood or much of the Mammoth Ivory so common these days. If you are in the market for a custom 1911, then Republic Forge should be on that list—maybe at the top. You get what you want at a fair price without wait times measured in years. It's pretty hard to beat. Having used the .38 Super years ago, it was not new, but ammunition back then was sparse and anemic. It's a new day with quality ammunition at real velocity using proven bullets, turning this into one of my favorite carry calibers. It may not replace the 10mm, but it will take up a good chunk of its carry time. For more information, visit [republicforge.com](http://republicforge.com).

■ PERFORMANCE		
REPUBLIC FORGE LW 1911 .38 SUPER		
LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
► BUFFALO BORE 115 TAC-XP	1,422	2.00
► DOUBLETAP 125 JHP	1,322	1.18
► WINCHESTER 125 SILVER TIP	1,197	1.85
► SIG SAUER V-CROWN 125	1,200	1.75

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



2" x 2" Square