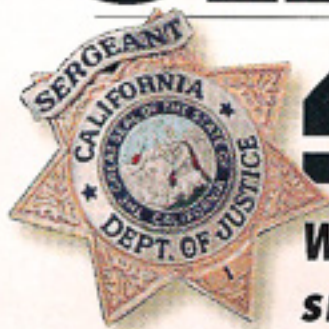




PARA CARRY

45ACP

By Todd Lofgren



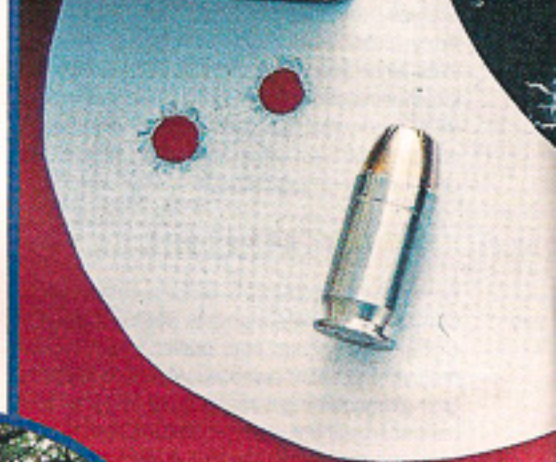
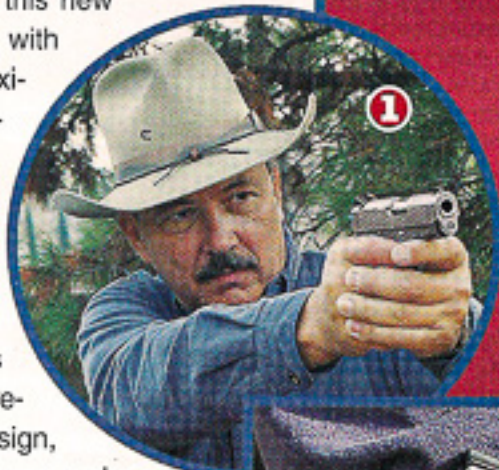
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1) The author found the Para Carry to be a reliable, powerful and easy packing pistol.
2) The high-ride design of the Bulman THR holster makes for a very concealable carry.
3) The C6.45 LDA is Para Ordnance's smallest entry into the .45ACP carry market.
4) For size comparison, the Para Carry is shown here between a custom Colt Lightweight Commander and a wide-bodied .40 caliber Para.

was the first commercial reduction of Browning's design, and with its aluminum frame and shorter slide it was a full 13 carryable ounces lighter than the steel-framed parent pistol. Although its grip frame remained the same length, the new Commander's slide was shortened by 3/4 of an inch, making this new, lighter pistol handier for concealed carry.

Since that time, a myriad of custom gunsmiths and firearms manufacturers have



The C6.45 produced sub-2-3/4" groups from the 15-yard mark with the carry ammo shown.



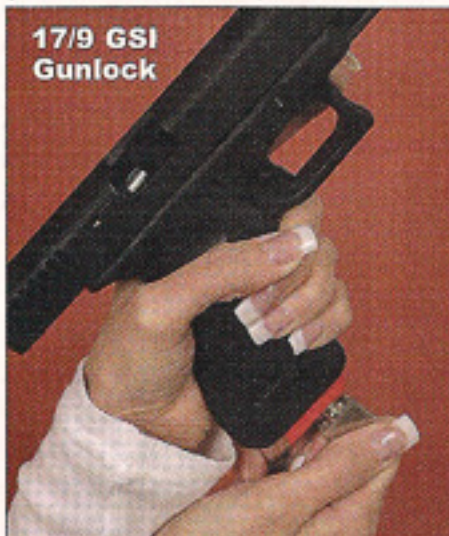
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PARA CARRY .45ACP

Powerful and portable, the little DAO Para should be a hit with the concealed carry crowd.

chopped and channeled the venerable .45, reducing its length, height, width, and weight even more. Barrel (and accompanying slide) lengths have gone from 5 to 4.25 to 3.5 inches until we now have pistols with barrels as short as 3 inches. I've always liked this trend of reducing the size and weight of proven carry pistols to make them, well, more carryable. After the first few Government

Models had their slides chopped by custom smiths, Colt began production of the all-steel Commander. Similarly, reducing the length and height of the Smith & Wesson Model 39, like on the ASP and Devel, resulted in the eventual commercial production of miniaturized models like the 3913 and 6904 by that same firm. Even though the first few models of pistols from Kahr, a relative newcomer on the firearms manufacturing scene, were small from the get-go, it wasn't long before Kahr was shortening slides and frames even more. And so it goes. As far as I'm concerned, this is good, real good, as long as all of this miniaturization doesn't result in a loss of reliability and/or weapon controllability. It's got to keep running with absolute dependability and there's got to be enough of it left to hold on to.

Back in the 1970s, I often found myself packing something like a .380ACP, usually in the form of a Walther PPK or PPK/S, when working undercover or while off duty. Today, I routinely pack a pistol that is essentially the same size as those Walthers but one that's chambered for a much more powerful cartridge. It holds more rounds than did the Walthers and, even with that, is still lighter overall in weight.

C6.45 LDA DETAILS

The newest member of this miniaturized line of handguns I've gotten to evaluate is the Para-Ordnance C6.45 LDA, aka the Para Carry. This is the third Para I've tested that's been equipped with the LDA or "light double-action" trigger system. A skeptic before I got to work out with my first so-equipped pistol, I've really come to appreciate this trigger arrangement. Although I've never found carrying a cocked and locked .45 a problem, there are those who find a holstered pistol with a



cocked hammer troublesome. In fact, over the years, I too, have encountered more than one fellow law enforcement officer who made me slightly nervous when they were packing in this mode.

The LDA trigger is an answer to that problem. A development by Para's Ted Szabo, the LDA system takes the "cocked" out of cocked and locked. Using an internal cocking cam/draw bar setup, the LDA pistols from Para have a double-action-only trigger system that allows the hammer to always remain at rest until actuated by pulling on the trigger. The pull on these pistols has to be experienced to understand just how controllable a trigger it is. If you're used to the long, stacking pull found on most DA to SA pistols, then the LDA setup will surprise you. Initial light pressure on the trigger moves it rearward to a point where a few pounds more causes the sear to break and the hammer to fall with a feeling much like that of a well-tuned single-action, and you get this same controllable pull each and every time. It's a difficult sensation to describe and I am continually amazed at how rapidly this trigger system can be worked.

The LDA series of pistols from Para-Ordnance started out with a wide-bodied, high capacity model and then evolved into a slimmer, single-stacked version with the overall dimensions of the Browning original. A reduction of slide and grip length of that pistol resulted in the Para Companion, a 7+1 round stainless steel Colt Officer-sized pistol. Undergoing further diminution has given us the Para Carry, a 1911-patterned pistol that now holds claim to being the world's smallest 1911-style double-action-only .45 autoloader.

With a barrel length of just 3 inches and a height and length of 4.78 and 6.5 inches respectively, this Para is one small package. With barrel, frame and slide (and most other parts) fabricated from stainless steel,

this hefty little heavy hitter tips the scales at 30 ounces empty. With its abbreviated single-stacked magazine stoked up with six rounds of Winchester 230-grain SXT Hollow Points and one more up the spout, the Carry weighs a respectable 36 ounces. I later found this heft to be a comfort when firing serious carry rounds from the likes of Cor-Bon and Winchester.

With a grip-frame length just shy of a half inch shorter than a Colt Officer's Model pistol, the Para Carry has just enough front strap for me to get my middle and ring fingers solidly wrapped around while my pinky ends up curled below the frame. This didn't seem to cause me any control prob-

PERFORMANCE

PARA CARRY C6.45 LDA .45ACP

Load	Velocity	Small Group	Large Group	Average
Federal 165 Hydra-Shok	904	2.34	3.80	2.98
Winchester 185 SilverTip	891	2.75	3.90	3.30
Winchester 230 SXT	790	1.78	3.02	2.35
Cor-Bon 165 Power Ball	1110	2.02	2.80	2.43

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second (fps) by Dehler P35 Chronograph, accuracy in inches for five shots bench rest from 15 yards.

SPECIFICATIONS PARA CARRY C6.45 LDA

Caliber: .45ACP • **Barrel:** 3 inches
OA Length: 6.5 inches
Height: 4.8 inches • **Weight:** 30 ounces
Sights: Fixed "Novak" style 3-dot
Action Type: Locked breech,
 double-action-only, semi-auto
Finish: Matte Stainless • **Capacity:** 6 + 1

lems when firing the Para Carry either one- or two-handed, but were it my intention to employ the pistol in the role of a serious carry gun, I think I'd have its now smooth front strap checkered at 25 or 30 lines per inch for added purchase.

The frame of the Para Carry as well as the top of its slide are finished off in a satin, bead-blasted finish, while the sides of the slide bear a nicely contrasted polished look. The slide wears a fixed Novak-type rear sight milled in, and its front sight is dovetailed in place. The rear sight is serrated across its face and bears two white

dots that align easily with the single white dot cut into the face of the front blade. I was never a fan of this three-dot-type setup until recently, much preferring black-on-black sights, but this has changed as my eyes have aged. I find that now, a three-dot setup is indeed an aid to quicker sight alignment.

In keeping with its ultra-concealable role, the C6.45's hammer has been bobbed and fits almost flush with and mirrors the contour of the rear of its slide. With its LDA trigger system, the C6.45 is incapable of being cocked so there is no need for the



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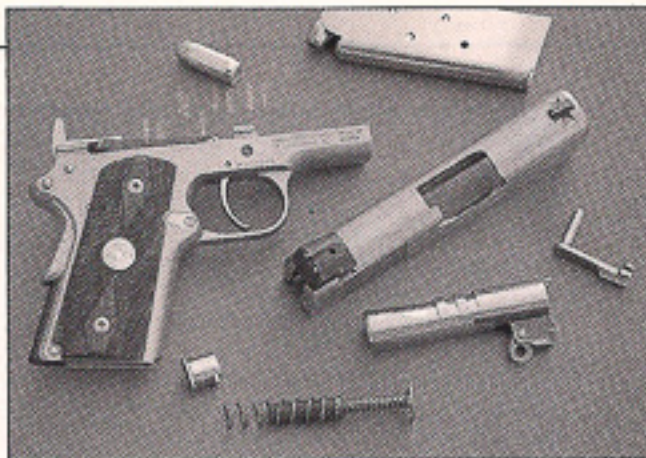
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PARA CARRY .45ACP

presence of a spur or burr on its hammer. Along with its bobbed hammer, the C6.45's grip safety has also been lopped off at its frame. Perhaps lopped off is too terse a term, but what we've all come to know and love as a "beavertail" is entirely absent on this pistol. At first blush, this seems like a perfectly acceptable modification, in light of its pairing with a spur-less hammer, since there is no hammer protrusion present to bite the web of one's hand. With that said, however, I did find during one shooting session where I performed a considerable number of draws from concealment with the C6.45, that if I didn't make a perfect grab on the pistol, my hand tended to end up too high on the back strap, as there was no extension or beavertail to snuggle up to. When fired with this hasty grip, the bottom of the slide raked the web of my hand during recoil. Does this mean I think the bobbed grip safety isn't a good idea? Well, yes and no. I say yes, because although it does make the C6.45 smaller overall and helps it qualify as the "smallest 1911-style dou-

ble-action-only .45 autoloader available." On the other hand, to afford a modicum of protection to one's hand, it would require just 0.3 of an inch protrusion from a well-shaped beavertail, which wouldn't detract one iota from the Carry's concealability. And then I could go with no, because this bobbed grip safety does give the Carry its unique look. And unless one were going to use it a lot from the holster, like for IDPA use where it is fired often and much, then I don't see its presence (or its absence, as it were) as a major problem. Even with that higher-than-I-would-have-liked grip, I still made the hits with this pistol and it was only after several mis-grips that it began to be a pain. Again, if it were my intention to carry and shoot this pistol plenty, I think I might look into fitting another grip safety with just a little bit of extension. It wouldn't have to be a full beavertail, but I would like something more



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there to help position and protect my hand.

The Carry has its ejection port lowered, flared, and opened up considerably. This should aid in positive ejection of fired cases and also allow for uninhibited removal of a loaded round from its chamber. The front or muzzle end of the Carry's slide has been tastefully beveled and this should aid in reholstering. The Carry has been given a light "dehoming" treatment and no sharp edges were left untreated that could cut or abrade. I've handled supposed carry pistols in the past that have had edges so sharp that firing them always resulted in an abrasion to the hand. The area on the Para that bit me was the bottom right edge of the back of its slide and this wouldn't have occurred with

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The Carry has a bushingless barrel and a special double recoil spring.

a perfect grip or a little more grip safety.

Even though the little Para has a double-action-only trigger system,

it still employs a slide lock or thumb safety that's located and operates in the same manner as one found on a single-action model. Para, I feel, wisely chose to use a safety without an extended paddle or lever, which I think is in keeping with this pistol's intended concealable role. Employ the safety, and the slide is locked in place and the trigger disengaged. Disengage the safety and you're good to go.

Speaking of safeties, the Para LDA series of pistols, which includes this Para Carry, is equipped with several safety devices above and beyond the slide lock safety. We've already mentioned the grip safety, which on the LDA pistol locks both the hammer and slide from movement until disengaged. Grasping the Para Carry in a normal firing grip disengages the grip safety and, provided the slide lock safety has been disengaged, readies the pistol to fire.

The LDA series of pistols are also equipped with two passive-type safeties, which are activated automatically, without manual intervention and are designed to prevent accidental discharges. This includes the "inertia firing pin," a firing pin that, because of its size and position, can't come in contact with a cartridge's primer unless subjected to a blow of the hammer and a "firing pin lock" that physically traps the firing pin until the trigger is intentionally pulled. This is a safe, well-designed little pistol.

Because of little available room inside the C6.45 for a recoil spring, the Para Carry uses a unique two-spring approach to afford enough spring strength to operate the pistol. This recoil spring assembly uses a short outer spring of conventional diameter containing approximately eight coils, which is mated to a smaller diameter multi-coiled spring that operates independently and essentially inside the larger spring. The combination of the two springs provides the necessary force to operate within the limited confines of the Carry's slide. This system worked quite well.

The Carry's barrel, a short stubby affair, is of the integral ramp design and is mated, sans barrel bushing, directly to the front end of the slide. The slide-to-frame fit on this Para Carry showed some movement up and down and side to side, as did the fit of its barrel within the slide, but this pistol wasn't built for, nor expected to produce, I'm assuming, match grade accuracy.

I weighed the pull on the Para Carry and determined that it took 6 pounds, 15 ounces to cause (Please turn to page 68)

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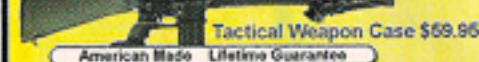
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PARA CARRY .45ACP

Continued from page 59

its hammer to fall. Again, that may sound somewhat heavy if you're used to the light-breaking pull of a well-tuned Government Model, but this is a good, easily controllable and safe pull weight for this pistol and one I urge be tried before passing judgment.

RANGE TIME

I tried out the Para Carry with four different high-end .45 ACP carry rounds from the likes of Winchester, Cor-Bon, and Federal. At 15 yards, the C6.45 produced groups ranging from a small of 1.78 inches to the largest that just shaded 4 inches for five shots. For individual results, refer to the included chart. With the sizzling 165-grain Power Ball loads from Cor-Bon, I began to appreciate the extra weight of this pistol afforded by its steel frame. Still, there's a part of me that would like to see this pistol produced with an alloy frame.

I only experienced one minor stoppage early on and this was when the C6.45's slide failed to fully close on one of the Winchester rounds. A quick bump of the rear of the slide chambered the recalcitrant round, and some 150 rounds later I failed to have any other miscues of any kind with this pistol.

On a second range outing, I tried the Para Carry with some of my lead bullet reloads on 8-inch steel plates, from the holster. I found hitting the 8-inch plates staged at anywhere from 12 to 18 yards quite easy with the Para and it proved 100 percent reliable with my reload.

CARRYIN' THE CARRY

And speaking about "from the holster," in anticipation of receipt of the Para Carry, I contacted Josh Bulman of Bulman Gunleather out of Newry, Pennsylvania, for one of his THR (The High Ride) holsters. Boy, have things changed from the early 1970s when finding a knowledgeable and talented holster maker was a difficult chore. There are some really fine holster makers out there now and, if the THR holster is indicative of all his products, Joshua Bulman is one of them. And speaking of the early 1970s, back in those early days, I worked dope enforcement with the Feds, DEA, and was continually amused by how a good many of them carried their hardware. For some reason, plenty of the Feds in my area liked to wear leather jackets, but invariably they were of the short-waist type. And although they looked cool in their cowhide cover-ups and were easy to distinguish from



The Para is shown with a high-rise "pancake" style holster from Bulman Gunleather, a first-rate carry combo.

us state and local narcs, they routinely wore these coats with a belt-carry arrangement that allowed the bottom one-third of their holstered hardware to peek out below their coat. This short-slided Para coupled with a Bulman high rise holster would have been a good combo for those guys.

The THR is a pancake style holster with belt loops fore and aft that rides extremely high on the belt. The one Josh made for the short-barreled Para extends only about half an inch below the bottom of the belt and is ideal for on or in-front-of-the-hip carry. The THR has my preferred zero-cant angle in that the pistol rides straight up and down, and it is handsomely and extensively hand boned to fit the contours of the gun. This hand boning eliminates the need for any type of external or add-on retention devices, and when I first holstered the Para into the THR, it literally snapped into place. So tight was its initial fit that the first couple of times I tried to draw from it, I literally couldn't get the Para free. Josh included a bottle of his Leather Conditioning Crème with the THR and after a couple of liberal applications of this to the inside of his holster and after fifty or so presentations the unit loosened up enough to allow a smooth draw. This is an exceptionally well-made holster that's well designed and whose construction is well executed. Handmade from high quality leather, edges are burnished, not just dyed, and stitching is tight and uniform. I wore the Para in the Bulman scabbard on a stout 2-ply gun belt for several days and this combo proved a comfortable, secure carry.

FINAL NOTES

While not truly tiny, the Para Carry claims title to the smallest 1911-style double-action-only pistol now available and there's nothing on the market today that can refute that claim. It's well built, reliable and accurate and plenty powerful enough to get the job done. With its safe-to-carry, very controllable trigger system, and when packed in a holster like the one from Bulman's, this is a combo with which I would feel well armed.

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PO Box 16776, Dept SGN • Salt Lake City, UT 84116-0776
Tel: 801-355-0401 Fax: 801-355-0402 Email: zdf@robarm.com