



Developed from the STI Edge, the Executive model is a favourite among those who compete in IPSC Standard Division

BEYOND THE EDGE

STI Executive Pistol

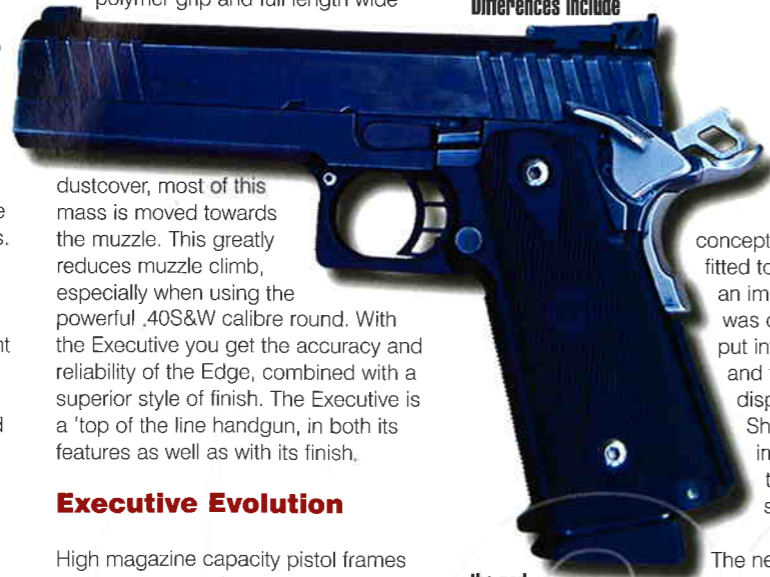
By Greg Roberts

Since the introduction of the STI Edge in 1997, this pistol has become the benchmark for IPSC (International Practical Shooting Confederation) Standard Division. It is also used by SWAT teams, Hostage Rescue teams and Law Enforcement units. In addition to police and military use, as well as IPSC events, the Edge sees widespread use in many other target shooting disciplines.

STI International of Georgetown in Texas, makers of the Edge, are involved in the manufacture of premium M1911 style pistols. The company use the nomenclature 2011 for their pistols, setting out the lineage of their guns, but is also an expression of STI's further development of the 1911 design. STI is a modern manufacturer using state of the art CNC (computer numerical control) and wire EDM (electronic discharge machining), which enables them to produce a very sophisticated production pistol using off-the-shelf parts that are of very high quality, due to these modern manufacturing processes.

The Executive is based on the Edge and both models are popular amongst sport shooters, especially in IPSC events. Differences between these two

weapons are mainly in finish. The Executive looks better in its hard chrome finish, with black markings. Apart from the polymer grip, all parts are made from steel. The magazine opening in the grip is widened by the addition of a large magazine well. It weighs in at 1200g (2.6 lbs) unloaded. Thanks to the polymer grip and full length wide



dustcover, most of this mass is moved towards the muzzle. This greatly reduces muzzle climb, especially when using the powerful .40S&W calibre round. With the Executive you get the accuracy and reliability of the Edge, combined with a superior style of finish. The Executive is a 'top of the line handgun, in both its features as well as with its finish.

Executive Evolution

High magazine capacity pistol frames have been around since the late eighties, when Para Ordnance developed a high capacity metal framed 1911 in .45 ACP. The grip used in STI pistols was originally developed using computer aided design (CAD) programs, which created a modular



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concept, with a steel upper section fitted to a synthetic grip assembly. In an impressive feat of engineering it was designed, built, debugged and put into production in just a year and the first models were displayed at the 1992 SHOT Show. Top IPSC shooters immediately realized the impact the design would have on their sport.

The new design did not take long to fulfil its promise. In the autumn of 1992 Jerry Barnhart used a gun built on the modular frame to win the US PSA Nationals. The modular design has been a dominant force in IPSC competition ever since. There have been changes in ownership of the design over the years.

the red insert in the front sight and magazine well plus the Executive is finished in a hard chrome coating

For a time the frames were marked TRI, then STI (for Strayer-Tripp International). In 1994 the Strayer-Tripp partnership broke up, with Virgil Tripp retaining the STI trademark while Sandy Strayer formed SVI (Strayer Voigt International). Virgil Tripp sold the Texas-based company to David Skinner, a local businessman and active competitive pistol shooter, who owned several electronic manufacturing businesses. Having an interest in firearms and taking part in practical pistol competitions Dave Skinner met Virgil Tripp at a match, and the rest is history.



Above: The front sight of the STI Executive is a target post style and has a light gathering red coloured fibre inserted into it

Above Right: STI pistols maintain the curved slide top as found on the original M1911. The light gathering fibre in the front sight can clearly be seen

THE REAR SIGHT OF THE STI EXECUTIVE IS THE CLASSIC BO MAR STYLE TARGET SIGHT, WITH PRECISE ELEVATION AND WINDAGE ADJUSTMENT

The evolution of the Executive came about when STI CEO Dave Skinner wanted an Edge to use in Standard Division competition. He had an Edge hard chromed and, to make it a bit more distinctive, he used a grey grip and trigger and stainless steel magazine well. Finding the plain black front sight a bit hard for middle-aged eyes to pick up, he had his gun fitted with a Dawson fibre optic front sight with a bright red insert.

The result proved to be a distinctive pistol. David found that whenever he went to a target shooting competition other shooters would ask him to "make me one just like that". Eventually he decided to add the Executive to the STI product line.

On the Outside

The STI Executive is based on the legendary Colt M1911. The barrel is five

inches long and fits directly in the slide, without a barrel bushing. This means the barrel can be of larger diameter and heavier, which also assists in the reduction of muzzle climb. The slide is CNC machined from 4140 bar stock



steel and is surface ground to give the smoothest possible mating surfaces and longest life. When hand cycling the gun, the slide glides along the frame. The breech face is wire EDM cut (an industry first) and the ejection port is enlarged to facilitate the manual ejection of live rounds. The slide has racking serrations at both the rear and front. These serrations in front are useful, as it makes racking the slide noticeably easier. The slide is polished and the cocking serrations have a matt finish. The slide does not have the normal scalloped lightening cuts at the forward end, again with the purpose of putting weight out front. Unlike some custom guns of this type, STI pistols do not have a 'flat topped' slide, but instead maintain the curved slide top as found on the original M1911.

The Executive is built on STI's long frame, in which the front extension of the frame extends right to the end of the slide. The purpose, again, is to put more weight forward to reduce muzzle climb. The entire frame has a matt finish, which makes for an interesting

Right: The STI Executive is based on the original Colt M1911. STI use the nomenclature 2011 for their pistols, which is an expression of their further development of the 1911 design



Our accuracy and function tests were conducted with 500 rounds of factory and reloaded ammunition; both full metal jacket and hollow point design in 150, 180 and 200 grains weights



contrast. The frame is equipped with ambidextrous enlarged thumb safety and beavertail safety. This enables higher grip, which allows the pistol to sit lower in the hand. This lowers the axis of the bore in relation to the gripping hands, which means the recoil comes more rearward, instead of the muzzle climbing skywards. The standard grip of the Executive is grey, which blends in with light finish of the whole weapon. For those who want it, the grip can be provided in several different colours.

The frame of the Executive is a two-part concept with an upper and lower assembly, called the Modular Competition System. The upper assembly is made from 4140 Maxxell alloy steel, consisting of the slide rails and full length dust cover. It contains the trigger mechanism and is mated to the lower assembly. The grip or lower assembly is made from glass filled nylon polymer, which eliminates the need for grip panels, leaving more room for the double column magazine, while keeping the width of the grip at manageable level for the average hand. The use of polymer in the construction of the frame keeps the weight down, making the Executive only slightly heavier than a .45 ACP M1911 Colt Government model. The grip is chequered on both sides, front and back for a firm hold. The beavertail grip safety features a palm swell or 'speed bump' so that it will be depressed regardless of the style of hold that the shooter uses. The ambidextrous safety catch is very positive in its function and is very comfortable to use.



Sights
Sights fit the character of this pistol. The front sight is provided with a light gathering red coloured fibre; other colours are available. The light gathering front sight is a great aid in

1: A high speed pistol requires a high speed holster. The Ghost competition holster was used in our accuracy tests. Its flawless draw, re-holster and retention make it a favourite amongst IPSC shooters

2: The Ghost holster securely retains the pistol, while allowing a rapid presentation to the target.

quickly acquiring the target, as the fibre really stands out in most light conditions. This is positive for both duty and sport shooting. The rear sight is the Bo Mar style standard plain black STI, adjustable for both elevation and windage.

One of my initial questions was, with the adjustable sights and magazine well, would the Executive fit the IPSC 'box' to make it eligible for IPSC Standard Division. The dimensions of the box are slightly bigger than those of a standard M1911 pistol, but it does fit the IPSC dimensions, and there is room to move. The efficient design of STI's magazine well, even when used in conjunction with extended aftermarket magazine base pad, passes this test.

The trigger, with titanium bow, can be provided in the same colour as the grip. It is set Crisp, Clean Move, No After Travel, which is what you need for accurate shooting. Out of the box the Executive trigger measures a crisp three pounds, with little pre-travel and a safe level of reset. The trigger pull weight can be reduced, but this should be performed by a competent gunsmith who has experience with the design.

The magazine release button is standard, but the gun can be ordered with larger button and also drilled and tapped to attach wider and bigger ones. The button drops the magazines cleanly when either empty or partially loaded. The magazine well is fitted to the gun with one pin that also holds the mainspring housing, so it is easy to remove, when needed. The fit of this

magazine well to the frame is clean, without any overlap. The well at the base of the grip is flared in order to accomplish fast reloads.

The STI magazines for this gun are 126mm in length, to be eligible for IPSC Standard Division and are a flush fit in the magazine well. They have a capacity of fifteen rounds of .40 S&W calibre ammunition. With the addition of extended base pads, followers and

specialised magazine springs, the magazine capacity can be increased up to eighteen rounds and still fit in the IPSC Box. The magazines can easily be taken apart for occasional cleaning. The Executive is built to be race ready from the box, for IPSC Standard Division. It is only offered in .40 Smith and Wesson calibre, as this is the cartridge of choice in this division. Size for size, it has a greater magazine capacity than .45 ACP.

.40 S&W Development

The .40 Smith and Wesson calibre was developed from the 10mm Auto calibre. The 10mm Auto launched a 200 grain bullet at velocities up to 1200 feet per second (fps). The FBI wanted to issue a pistol chambered in this calibre to all its personnel, but the recoil generated by the 10mm Auto was too much for the average field agent to deliver fast and accurate shots. The bureau asked one of the ammunition manufacturers to produce a 10mm round at a reduced velocity



that would give a corresponding reduction in recoil. By reducing the powder charge in the cartridge case they came up with a 180 grain bullet at 950 fps, which has been dubbed

3: The flared magazine well has a funnelling effect to guide the magazine into the grip. Once the magazine enters, it can be

slapped home with the heel of the hand

4: Four members of the six-strong STI European IPSC Team. From left, Gregory Midgley and Fabrizio Pesce use .40 S&W STI Edge models. Irene Canetta uses an STI Grandmaster in



.38 Super and Ralf K. Jensen uses a .40 S&W STI Executive

5: The Executive field strips into slide, barrel, frame, magazine, slide lock lever and recoil master spring system. The green plug is used in the assembly / disassembly of the recoil master



10mm Lite. This left a gap between the base of the bullet and the powder charge in the case. Winchester removed this gap simply by reducing the overall length of the cartridge case and changed from a large pistol primer to a small pistol primer. This ammunition could also fire a 180 grain bullet at 950 fps but the package was small enough to fit into a pistol that was originally sized to shoot the 9mm round. The .40 S & W round was born.

Other firearms and ammunition manufacturers followed suit and there are now a wide range of pistols chambered, and ammunition types

manufactured, in this calibre. American law enforcement agencies took a keen interest in the .40 S&W and it has become the most common handgun calibre in use with American police. Target shooters fell in line behind the police and while it has not replaced civilian sales of 9mm, .38 Special and .45 ACP, it has captured a sizable chunk of this market. The 'forty' will increasingly become a dominant force in commercial sales.

On the Inside

When you pick up an Executive, the perfect fit and finish can be felt at the first touch. The pistol fits right in the hand and the magazine well makes the hold even firmer and makes reloading easier. The difference in the build, fit, finish and quality is huge, when compared to other handguns. Barrel to slide fit, slide to frame fit, as well as fit of other parts, is precise. When racking the slide you can feel that the fit of the parts is tight and the slide operation is smooth.

I have examined many Edges and Executives which have fired many thousands of rounds and there is no

THE EXECUTIVE IS BUILT ON STI'S LONG FRAME. THE FRONT EXTENSION OF THE FRAME EXTENDS RIGHT TO THE END OF THE SLIDE, WHICH PUTS THE BALANCE OF THE WEIGHT FORWARD TO REDUCE MUZZLE CLIMB



noticeable play. The .40S&W calibre is very easy to shoot in this gun. Thanks to the five inch barrel, precise fit and weight in the right places (near the muzzle), the recoil is very manageable. The weight is right for the recoil to be manageable, but not too much to make it slow on transitions between targets.

The shape of the grip, beavertail safety and magazine well ensures that, after each shot, the weapon returns just on the same spot. Due to this, it is possible to manage the recoil and to shift the aim onto other targets during recoil. Also the time between each shot can be reduced. Perfect fit of the parts, a well-tuned trigger and precise fit of the barrel are the necessities for a precise weapon. The Executive fulfils and exceeds these requirements.

Barrel

The Executive's five inch bull barrel starts life as a Jarvis forged blank manufactured from 416R stainless steel, which is just about the best barrel steel that you can get. The barrels are button rifled with a one turn in sixteen inch rifling twist and air gauged for accuracy. STI barrels are vacuum heat treated and tempered to



6: Though primarily a competition pistol, many police and military units familiar with the M1911 realised that the features offered by STI are equally beneficial in a pistol carried on duty

7: All the weight is at the front of the Executive, which controls the recoil and assists tracking between targets. The red insert makes the front sight easier to pick up in your vision

40 Rockwell hardness, then machined. The slide and upper frame are also heat treated before machining. Heat treating before machining ensures that no warpage occurs. This is tough on machine tool life, but this is the way STI does it. STI barrels are all of bull configuration. There is no barrel bushing (as found on a conventional M 1911 pistol) so the barrel mates to the slide in a three point lock up. The lower and upper lugs and barrel hood are cut for minimal tolerances. The feed ramp angles and barrel throating were researched to ensure maximum reliability.

Recoil Master

As it comes from the factory, the Executive utilises STI's 'Recoil Master' system. Having previously used the standard recoil spring and tungsten recoil guide rod in an Edge, STI sent me a recoil master to try and I have used it ever since. The dual springs and smooth action means the firing cycle is very fast and the recoil is more manageable. This system is also much easier to insert and remove from the pistol for cleaning purposes.

Range Tests

Accuracy testing was carried out at 25



yards using a mixture of factory ammunition and ammunition reloaded to IPSC major power factor, with bullet weights of 180 and 200 grains. With the pistol rested, five shot groups of between one and two inches in size were achieved. This is due in no small part to the excellent sights and trigger. Standing with two hands unsupported gave a ten shot group of four inches at 25 yards. I also carried out a series of speed drills in drawing from the holster, shooting with two hands, strong hand and weak hand at one and multiple targets from five to twenty five yards. I fired double taps with both strong and weak hands, as fast as I could obtain a flash sight picture, and also fired deliberately aimed shots at the upper A/B zone of a practical pistol target. It is at distances out to 15 yards that the extra weight of the Edge pays off, to give you a faster recovery time between shots. The Ghost competition holster was used to hold the Executive during this exercise. This holster is adjustable for both height and angle of carry for a smooth uninhibited draw. Draws from the Ghost were faultless. Single shots, double taps and rapid fire strings all found their mark.

The felt recoil was negligible, reliability faultless for the entire five hundred rounds tested through two Executives. The polymer frame absorbs the shock of discharge. The pistol was one hundred percent reliable with all the ammunition types used. This is due to the research that STI put into the feed ramp, barrel throating and the configuration of the magazine feed lips to ensure a smooth transfer of the round from the magazine to the chamber of the barrel.



Conclusion

High capacity M 1911 style pistols are not just popular among target shooters. Law enforcement officers and military units who were familiar with the M1911 realised that many of the features that were desirable in a pistol for IPSC competition shooting were equally beneficial in a pistol carried on duty. The US Army's Special Forces Operational Detachment Delta, FBI Hostage Rescue Teams and LAPD SWAT are among many agencies that carry M1911 cocked and locked .45 calibre pistols. Many of the features that are found on the pistols that these units carry were originally developed for and tested in the field of competition pistol shooting.

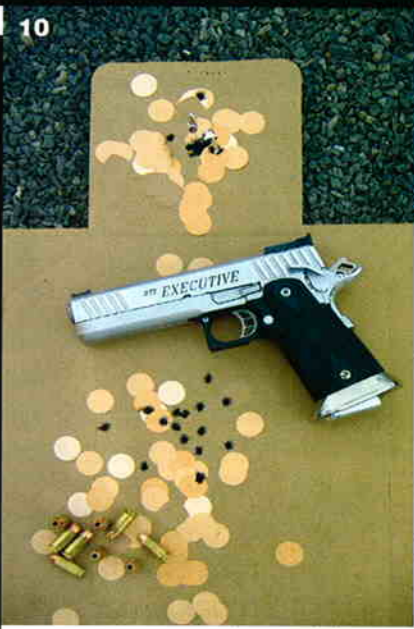
Built on STI's patented 2011 model full length dust cover frame, the Executive comes complete with a polished steel magazine well, stainless ambidextrous safety catch and beavertail grip safety,

THE SHOOTER NEEDS TO KNOW HOW TO HANDLE HIS GUN AND HOW IT WILL PERFORM IN ALL SITUATIONS THAT HE OR SHE WILL FACE. THAT REQUIRES A WELL MADE WEAPON THAT IS ACCURATE, DEPENDABLE AND WILL NOT HAVE ANY MALFUNCTIONS OR OTHER PROBLEMS. STI PISTOLS RUN LIKE THE PROVERBIAL SWISS WATCH...

8: One of Europe's top IPSC Standard Division competitors, Ralf K Jensen, runs and guns through a stage with his STI Executive

9: The standard grip colour for the Executive is grey, but grips can be ordered in a variety of colours to the owner's choice

10: We put 500 rounds of factory and reloaded ammunition through the Executive. Accuracy was excellent and functioning was flawless



a fully adjustable Bo Mar inspired rear sight for windage and elevation and a target blade front sight that is pinned to the slide. The front sight is fitted with a red fibre insert, which is highly visible. For the money, the customer gets a truly great pistol, which will serve them for many years and shoot many thousands of rounds. The Executive is 'ready to go' out of the box and is designed to perform at the highest level.

When measuring how precise the pistol can group at 25 yards, group size is between one and two inches, depending on ammunition type. Accuracy is only one part of practical pistol shooting. IPSC, SWAT and Hostage Rescue require dynamic shooting. They require that the shooter and weapon act 'as one'. The shooter needs to know how to handle his gun and how it will perform in all situations that he or she will face. That requires a well made weapon that is accurate, dependable and will not have any malfunctions or other problems. STI pistols run like the proverbial Swiss watch. That is why they are so popular among top shooters, and not just target shooters, around the world.

Further Info - USA
www.stiguns.com
www.ghostholster.com

Further Info - Europe
www.teamsti.org
www.gunmaker.de
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