

Combat Handguns - Gunfighting, Guns, Gear

Excerpted from

LOW LIGHT DILEMMA- SHOOT/NO-SHOOT

By Walt Rauch

Guns



STI's Tactical model 1911 with ITI/Streamlight M-6 tactical light attached.



STI V.I.P. 1911 (left), Trojan (front center) and Tactical Model (right).



V.I.P. (top), Trojan (center) and Tactical (bottom). Front straps on polymer frame guns have impressed checkering; steel frame has "STI plling".

The STI line of 1911 handguns is almost the Rodney Dangerfield of the defensive 1911 crowd; the guns just don't get any respect, save for the relatively low number of folks (as compared to buyers of other "name" 1911s who have "discovered" what the Action Shooting crowd has known for going on two decades. STI builds guns that can run and run, and are accurate. They also happen to be eye-pleasing as well. There are several flavors of STIs now and I recently received three, the Tactical, V.I.P. and Trojan for T&E. The Tactical and V.I.P. are polymer-frame guns containing a steel (Tactical) or aluminum (V.I.P.) module on which the slide assembly travels. The Trojan is a single-column all-steel gun. (Note: the STI guns do not have passive firing pin safeties such as those installed in many other currently made 1911s.)



To allow room for the dual spring system, a flat has been milled on the barrel.

The polymer frame has impressed 30-line per inch (Lpi) checkering on the entire gripping area and 25-lpi checkering on the forward face of the squared trigger guard. The Trojan has what STI terms "STI pling" on the forward face of the grip, a variation of the scalloping done by Richard Heinie, while the polymer mainspring housing uses 25-lpi impressed checkering. All use the long, light, polymer trigger with over travel screw, the same wide, upswept-design grip safety and extended thumb safeties. The Trojan has thinned grip panels nicely done with large diamonds around the grip screws and the remainder checkered.

Fixed rear sights are either STI or Heinie, with STI front sights; both are nicely dovetailed into the slide. Night sights are available as an option. The slides have a flat center section that's attractive, as are the diagonal gripping grooves either front and rear or rear only, depending on the model. Ejection ports are lowered and flared. Curiously, the magazine catch buttons are smooth-faced, but this presented no problems while doing quick magazine changes. Hammers are of the Rowel (rounded) design and, on the Trojan, there are two lightening grooves on the hammer's flanks. Slide stops are protected by a molded recess within the polymer frames as an aid to preventing the inadvertent bumping of this part while firing.



STI guns offer Heinie or STI adjustable rear sights, cone barrel or traditional barrel and bushing.

The grip circumference of the polymer frame is slightly larger than the all-steel Trojan, which goes 5.38 inches compared to the V.I.P. 5.63 inches. The Tactical model was STI President Dave Skinner's demo gun, which had inadvertently been sent to me and was needed back immediately for an overseas trip. I shot it some, but not as much as I would have liked.

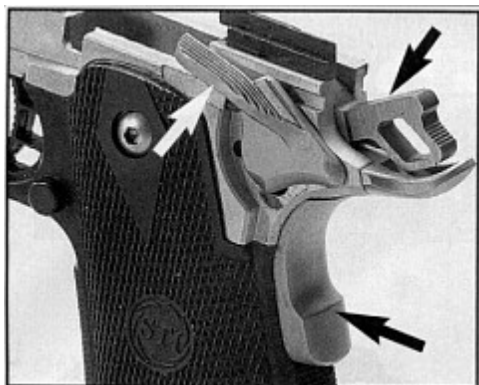
I was particularly interested in the V.I.P. as I had requested it in 9mm and, based on my experiences with other 9mm chambered 1911s, I was wondering what 9mm loads would work in it. John Lysak and Joe Venezia helped me with the shooting, and I asked John to get on the V.I.P. and simply shoot up a variety of 9mm ammo. Initially, the gun only ran with standard velocity 115-grain and 124-grain JRN, but after a hundred rounds it then worked with the following brands that all have some variation of hollow point bullet and bullet weights including; Remington Golden Saber and Disintegrator, Federal Hydra-Shok, Winchester WinClean, Ranger and SXT Personal Protection, Hornady and CCI-Gold Dot +P. It also digested all Cor-Bon loads save a box of 90-grain JHP +P loads, a very "stubby" cartridge.



The fully-supported barrel is seen as a very desirable feature.

Obviously, the 1994 Crime Law put a crimp in market demand for normal capacity guns whose original design cartridge capacity exceeded the now-mandated 10 rounds. The V.I.P., with its shorter 3.9-inch barrel and reduced grip length makes the gun attractive for personal defense and for competition, where capacity is limited to 10 rounds.

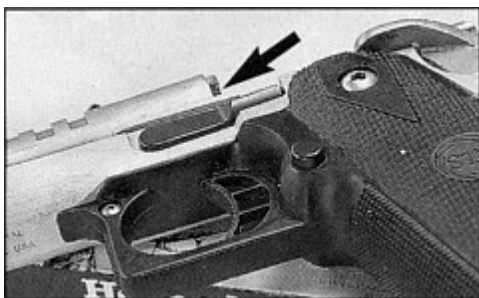
The Trojan, mostly shot by Joe and me, simply is an accurate and well-functioning single-column 1911 that ran with all the above-listed brands, including +P ammunition in .45ACP. The STI rear adjustable sight does adjust, for we had to crank on it to get it printing center at 25 yards.



Note grooved hammer, wide upswept grip safety with "memory pad" and a well-fitting extended safety.

The polymer-frame guns use bull barrels with a dual recoil spring system. A tool is included for easy removal. Take the time to use it and save your fingers. The Trojan uses a full-length guide rod and traditional barrel bushing. All the guns had ramped barrels, a feature thought to improve feeding and increase safety in case of an overloaded cartridges.

The Tactical has a light rail molded into the dust cover, so Joe and I shot it with an ITI/Streamlight M-6 tactical light installed. Again, no surprise. The gun worked with all the same .45ACP ammunition as well as reloaded .45s topped with lead 200-grain SWC and 230-grain RN bullets from Rogers Better Bullets. Downrange, the five shot groups on the Shoot-N-C targets were more than satisfactory, with all groups running sub-3 inches at 25 yards fired from a seated gun bag rest. All good to go.



Slide stop is inset polymer frame. Magazine catch is left unchecked.