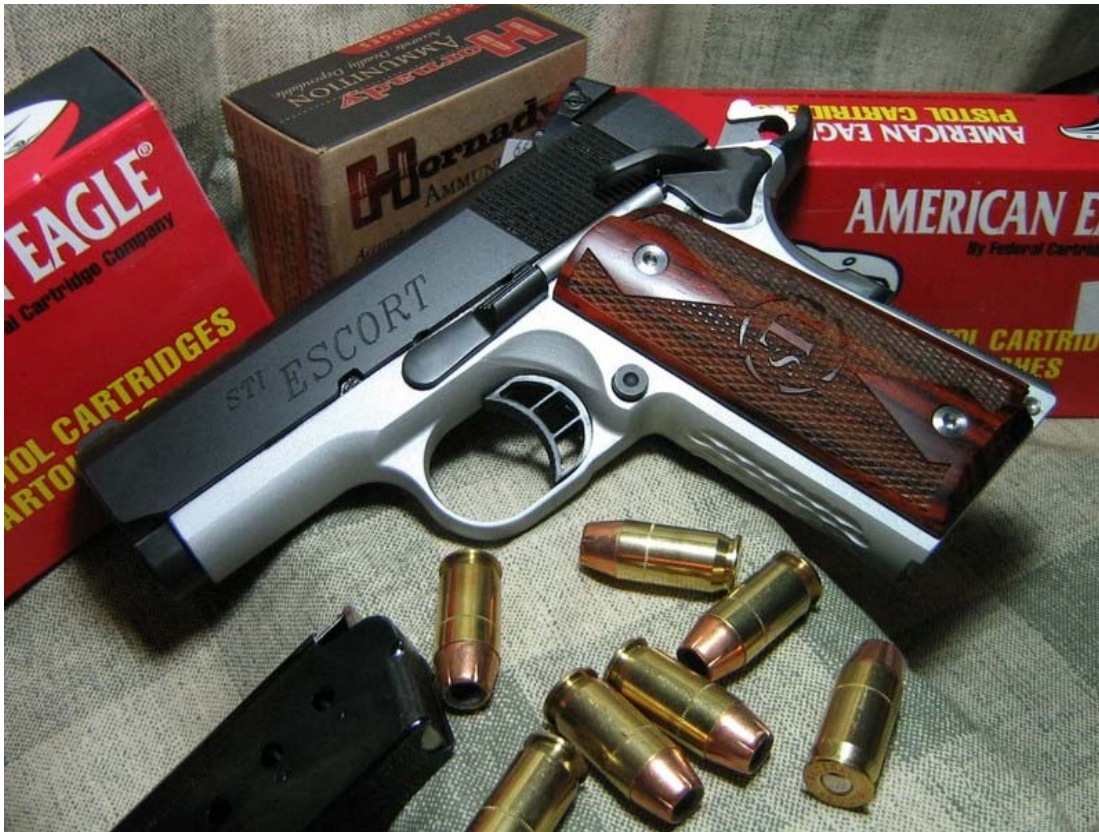




STI Escort

"A beautiful 3 inch 1911 that performs as well as it looks."

A Gun Test by Steve Clark (Rio Vista Slim, [E-mail Steve](#))



When any manufacturer of 1911-type pistols announces a new offering, the M1911 Pistols Organization E-zine staff immediately begins the process of trying to obtain an example for tests and evaluation for you, our readers.

Most companies will have a functioning prototype before regular production begins. This can sometimes cause problems, especially if that prototype has to go to all the various media outlets (both print and electronic) for evaluations. That poor gun bounces all over the place, including several trips back to the maker to cure any problems that might have cropped up. Then the manufacturer "crosses their fingers", and hopes for a positive response. In the case of the print magazines, that response can be skewed by the amount of money the company spends in advertising with the magazine.

Other manufacturers will announce a new gun (preferably at the annual SHOT Show), and then send out the pistols as they become available from regular production. This practice makes for a more even playing field between the various reviewers, but then it also creates a race to see who will be first with the definitive test and evaluation.

We saw the first example of STI International's Escort .45 ACP 1911 at the 2007 SHOT Show in Orlando, Florida during the month of January, 2007. STI is well known internationally as the maker of some of the finest competition guns on the planet. The Georgetown, Texas based manufacturer also offers an extensive line of single stack 1911s, as well as an excellent array of frames, slides, barrels, and any other accoutrements one might want to either build-your-own custom pistol, or enhance a personal gun.

This first Escort had all of us here at the M1911 Pistols Organization "chomping at the bit" in anticipation of receiving the test pistol. Sportscaster Keith Jackson's popular phrase of "Whoa Nellie!" was Jay Dunlap's response. Jay is one of our "go to" guys at STI, and he made it clear from the beginning that their company doesn't ship pistols to anyone until they are satisfied with the reliability, functioning, and quality of their guns. The nine-month-long delays between SHOT Show announcement and the receipt of the test pistol became a little excruciating, especially when we began seeing the gun for sale on a couple of internet sites. However, our persistence paid off.

The question to be answered in this review is whether the delay was worth the wait.

The Pistol

The STI Escort is shipped in a black plastic clamshell case, padded with egg-crate foam lining. The box contained the pistol (completely sealed in a clear plastic bag), the owner's manual, a small zip-lock plastic bag containing a 5/32 " hex head wrench and take-down tool, and a small bag of desiccant.



I must confess that I was testing another pistol when the Escort arrived at Great Guns in Burleson, Texas. Although this situation didn't prevent me from acquiring the gun, a slight delay on my part was necessary in order to complete my prior commitment.

Manager Bill Lamb and I tore into the plastic surrounding the pistol to better read the serial number for transfer. (Yeah, right!!) The plastic covering didn't conceal the two-tone finish present on the Escort, and removal from the bag allowed us the opportunity to examine the gun more closely.





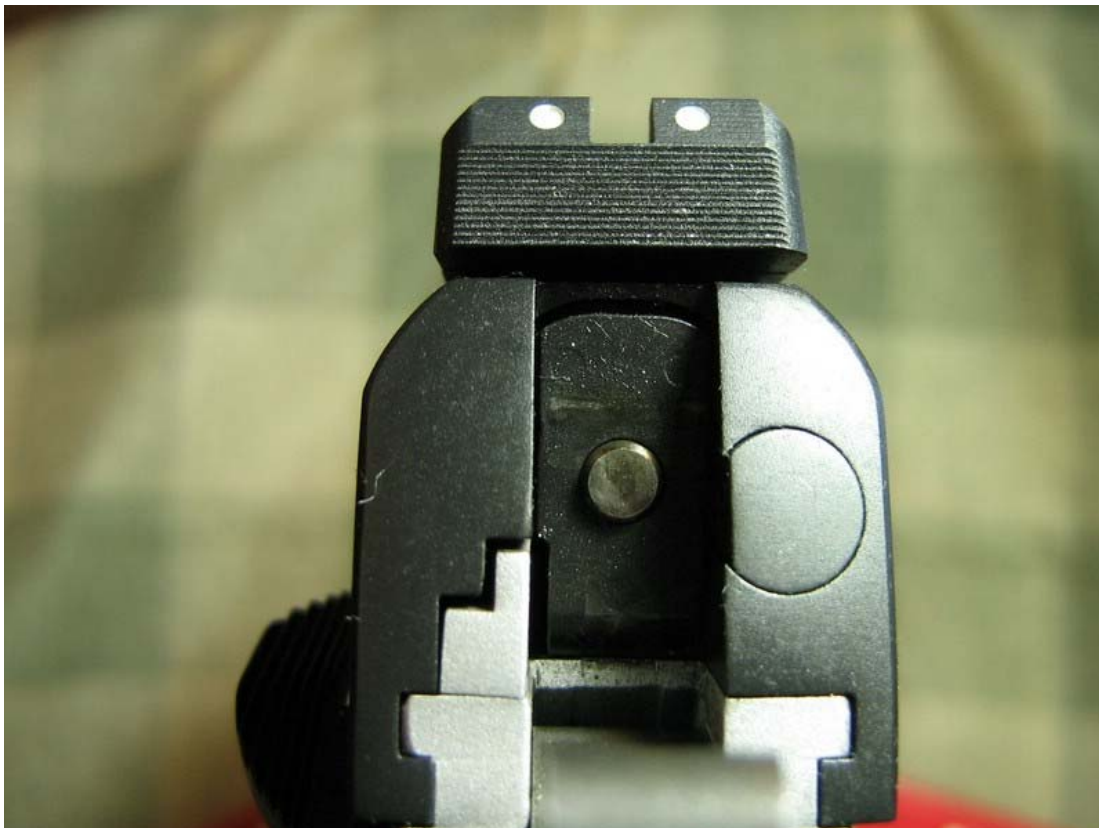
The STI Escort sports a blued steel slide over a forged aluminum, officer-sized Duracoat frame. "STI Escort" is emblazoned on the left side of the slide, while the right side features STI's corporate logo. Eighteen angled cocking serrations are present on each side of the rear of the slide, and provide a solid grip for cycling the action. The ejection port is lowered to more reliably spit out the spent casings.

The STI Tactical Adjustable Sight (T.A.S.) sits in a Novak cut on the rear of the slide. The rear face of this sight has horizontal serrations below the two white dots which bracket the notch. This rear sight blends in nicely with the contour of the slide.

The front sight has a single white dot in the center of the inclined ramp. This unit is also blended into the angle of the slide, and is dove-tailed into position.



This photograph shows the STI corporate logo on the right side of the slide. The lowered ejection port is also featured in this photo.



The STI Tactical Adjustable Sight.



A side view of the T.A.S. sight, as well as the cocking serrations and the single extended shelf thumb safety, are displayed in this photograph. The beavertail grip safety is also shown in this photo.



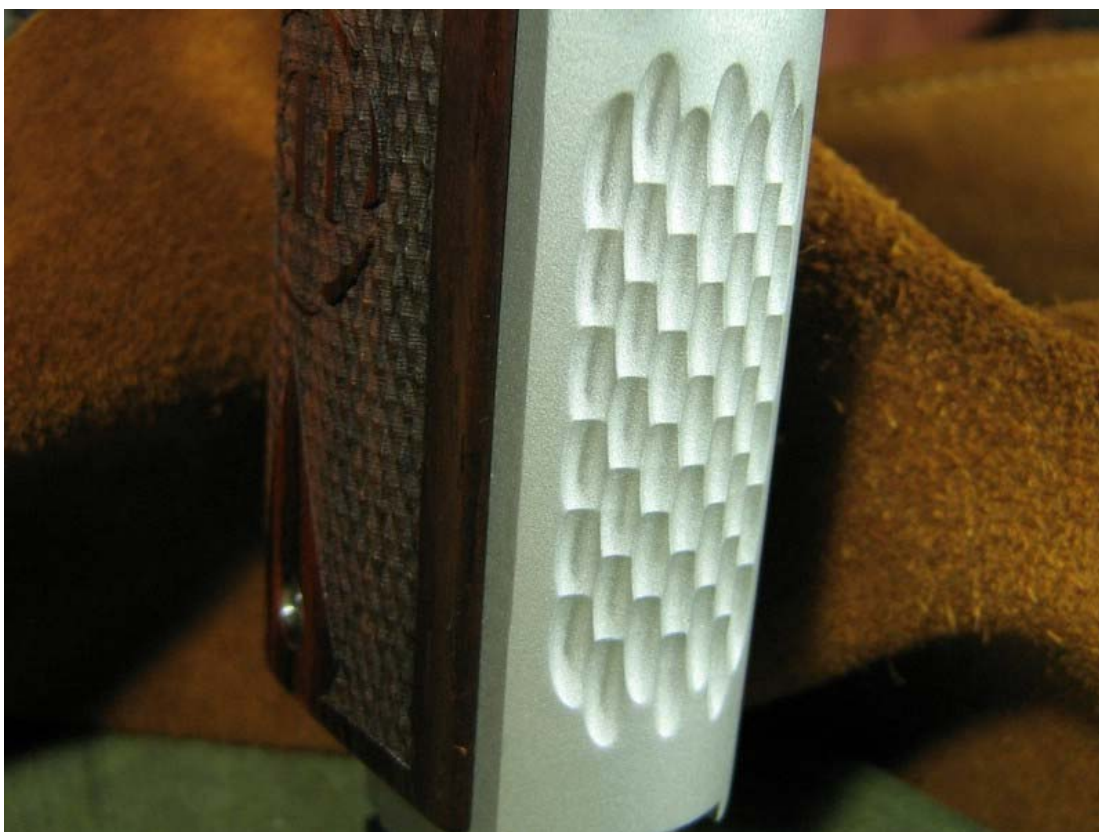
The front sight is dovetailed in position, and the edges are rounded off to blend with the contour of the slide. Note the white dot on the surface of the sight.

This pistol utilizes a 3 inch bull barrel, which is ramped and fully supported in the frame. There is no barrel bushing present on the muzzle end of the gun, as none is needed with the precise fit of the barrel to the slide.



Moving down to the Duracoat frame, the nicely checkered stocks are noticed immediately. These stocks are made from cocobolo wood and feature STI initials on each side. The checkering treatment of the stocks blends in well with the stippling present on the front strap. The frame is undercut under the trigger guard, and coupled with the tang on the grip safety, allows for a high hold on the pistol during firing. The nylon polymer mainspring housing is checkered at 20 lines per inch.

The slide stop, magazine catch, extended shelf single thumb safety, high ride beavertail grip safety, mainspring housing, and pins to secure these items are all blued. This presents a nice contrast to the silver colored Duracoat frame. It should be noted that all safety appliances functioned correctly, the thumb safety in particular having a very positive click-on/click-off feel.





The trigger is the STI long curved unit. This unit has an EDM cut stainless steel trigger bow. The trigger face is glass filled nylon polymer, and is adjustable for over-travel.

The trigger has about one-sixteenth of an inch take-up, with no gritty feel at all. The sear cleanly released at 5 pounds of pressure, as recorded by repeated measurements from my RCBS Trigger Pull Gauge.



This photograph shows the STI long curved trigger face, featuring the over-travel adjustment screw in the rear. This photo also shows the under cut frame beneath the trigger guard.



The "memory bump" on the grips safety is shown in this picture.



The STI Commander Hammer, high ride beavertail grip safety, and blue pins are visible in this photograph.



The STI identification marks on the right side of the frame, above the trigger guard, are shown in this photo.

The STI Escort is shipped with one six-round Novak magazine. This magazine has a flat base plate, stainless steel follower, and proved to be quite reliable. The magazine well is slightly beveled.





Disassembly

Most of the 3" barreled 1911s on the market these days are equipped with bull barrels. As a result, field stripping the weapon is much different than with a conventional 5" barreled piece.

After removing the magazine and checking to be sure the pistol is completely unloaded, cock the hammer and move the slide to the rear, aligning the take-down notch on the frame with the rear of the slide stop. Press the opposite (right side) portion of the slide stop pin, and remove the slide stop. The slide can then be removed from the frame by moving it forward, off the rails.

(Caution: Eye protection is recommended for the next portion of the disassembly.)

Turn the slide over, exposing the bottom of the barrel and the STI Recoil Master guide rod and spring assembly. Using your thumb, the guide rod head is pushed toward the muzzle of the pistol, compressing the recoil springs. When the system is at full compression, the **Take Down** tool (provided with the pistol) is inserted between the head of the guide rod and the front of the spring tube. The captured system is then removed by pulling the guide rod head towards the rear of the slide. The **Take Down** tool will have to be rotated to clear the barrel link, but this is easily seen and done. Once the Recoil Master guide rod and spring assembly is removed, the barrel can be removed toward the front of the slide.

The STI Escort is not equipped with a firing pin safety mechanism, so further disassembly is exactly like that required with full size 1911 type pistols.

Reassembly is in reverse order, being mindful to have the **Take Down** tool positioned correctly to clear the barrel link, and fit through the opening in the muzzle area of the slide. As with any new or different procedure, it took a couple of times for me to get the hang of field stripping this weapon. After that, it was easy to accomplish.



Photograph of the Take Down tool supplied with each STI Escort.



The Take Down tool installed on the Recoil Master guide rod and spring assembly.



This photo shows (in reverse) how the Take Down tool fits over the Recoil Master guide rod. The Take Down tool must be in this position in order for the Recoil Master guide rod to be removed from the slide.



The STI Escort field stripped.

Shooting Impressions

It is no secret (to those who have read my previous reviews) that I am not a big fan of the ultra small .45s. I have personally had some bad luck with the breed, and this has tainted my opinion of them. However, if I've learned nothing in my life, I have learned to give people and things second chances.

STI International is located in Georgetown, Texas, which makes us practically neighbors. I wanted to test the Escort because I believe that this company could get it right!

For my first shooting session with the Escort, I stepped outside with 150 rounds of 230 gr. full metal jacketed rounds from PMC, Federal American Eagle, and Winchester.



This photograph shows the results of the first 50 rounds, rapidly fired from a distance of 10 yards (30 feet) at a reduced FBI B-27 silhouette target. I utilized a two-handed modified Weaver stance. The dispersal suggests I drank too much coffee before commencing this round of testing!

The pistol functioned reliably through this initial firing test. The slide locked open after the completion of each magazine fired. Recoil was about what is expected from an aluminum-framed 1911 of this size (sharp, but not unmanageable). Extraction of spent cartridge casings was both positive and flawless. Throughout the shooting tests, empties were deposited five feet to the right rear of my shooting position.

The gun evaluators of the M1911 Pistols Organization have a standard practice of testing the accuracy of pistols, with barrels of less than 4 inches, at a distance of 15 yards (45 feet, 13.7 meters). In our collective experience, the reduced sight radius of these shorter barreled pistols makes shooting for accuracy more difficult. Additionally, since these weapons are designed for short range use, 25 yard accuracy calculations would be misleading.

Since the chronograph readings and the taking of accuracy measurements were co-mingled, I will present a photograph of a representative target.



This target was engaged from a distance of 15 yards (45 feet) from the muzzle of the STI Escort. The vertical spread measured seven-eighths of an inch. Ammunition was Federal Gold Medal Match 185 gr. Full Metal Jacket/Semi-Wad cutter.

later adjusted the sights to strike dead-center on the NRA 25 Yard Pistol Target, but by that time I had fired over 350 rounds. The fact that I was tired, and the pistol was quite dirty, contributed to larger overall groups, with averages of about two and one-half inches recorded.

My Competitive Edge Dynamics Millennium Chronograph was set up with the muzzle of the Escort 10 feet from the closest diffuser screen. My target stand was placed 15 yards from the muzzle. At the time of this test, the temperature was 85 degrees Fahrenheit (29 degrees Celsius), 40% humidity, with winds blowing out of the south at 15 miles per hour (24 kilometers per hour). The skies were clear.

Ammunition	Muzzle Velocity (feet-per-second/meters-per-second)					Best 5 shot group
	Min.	Max.	Avg.	Extreme Spread	Standard Deviation	
Federal 185 gr. FMJ SWC Gold Medal Match	694 211.5	748 227.9	720 219.4	53 16	20 6	7/8" (21 mm)
Federal American Eagle 230-gr. Full Metal Jacket	749 228	772 235	760 231.6	23 7	9 2.7	1" (25.4 mm)
PMC 230 gr. FMJ	719 219	760 231.6	742 226	40 12	11 3.3	1 1/2" (38.1 mm)
Hornady 200-gr Jacketed Hollow Point/XTP	790 240.7	859 261.8	828 252	68 20.7	25 7.6	1 3/4" (44.45 mm)
Armscor 230-gr FMJ	777 236.8	802 244	788 240	25 7.6	Data N/A	1" (25.4 mm)
Winchester White Box 230 gr. FMJ	Data Compromised					1 1/2" (38.1 mm)
Speer 230 gr. Gold Dot Hollow Point	762 232	781 238	773 235.6	19 5.79	6 1.8	1 1/2" (38.1 mm)

Ammo donated by:



In all, 100 rounds of PMC 230 gr. FMJ, 100 rounds of Federal American Eagle 230 gr. FMJ, 100 rounds of Armscor Precision 230 gr. FMJ, 100 rounds of Winchester White Box 230 gr. FMJ, 40 rounds of Speer Gold Dot 230 gr. JHP, 60 rounds of Hornady 200 gr. JHP/XTP, and 50 rounds of Federal Gold Medal Match 185 gr. FMJ/SWC were fired during the course of the shooting tests. I experienced no malfunctions of any kind during the duration of the test.

Concealment

The reason these types of 1911s were developed centered on light weight and concealment. The unloaded weight of the STI Escort is 22.8 ounces. The loaded weight will vary with the type and grain weight of ammunition used. While I cannot tote a pistol that does not belong to me all over the "wilds" of Texas, I did try the Escort in one of my all time favorite outside-the-waistband holsters during the duration of my shooting tests.



Andy Arratoonian's #28 Covert holster is one of the two most comfortable OWB holsters that I own, and the STI Escort fit in it like a glove. With this particular holster, the pistol is carried high and tight, and is totally concealed under even the thinnest of shirts. I highly recommend Horseshoe Leather (Andy's one-man company) for any of your holster needs.

Evaluation

The Escort represents STI International's first foray into the world of the highly concealable 3" barreled 1911 market. The engineering needed to successfully mate the recoil springs, timing, and smaller dimensions of the Escort is most evident when the weapon is rapidly fired. The stippled front strap significantly aids in holding the pistol during multiple shots, yet is not so coarse as to abrade one's hand while firing. The undercut area under the trigger guard, as well as the high ride beavertail makes for an elevated hold on the pistol. This combination aids in follow-up shots, as well as keeping the slide and hammer from "biting" the shooter.

The Escort is (to me) a very visually pleasing pistol. The two-tone color arrangement was admired by several folks who saw the gun while it was in my care. While I personally tend to favor pistols of one color, the Escort is one of those exceptions that I appreciate.

Nothing in this world is perfect for everyone, and I have a couple of items I question. Plastic (actually, glass-filled nylon polymer) triggers are something I know little about, as none of my personal 1911s have one. STI obviously makes one of the better ones, as the trigger smoothly operated (albeit a little on the heavy side) throughout the tests.

In addition, the smallish white dot in the center of the front sight was difficult for me to see clearly, especially after several hundred rounds had dirtied it up. It can easily be cleaned, but after cleaning, it's still too small for my eyes.

So, with those two minor "nits picked", what was my overall impression?

The STI Escort is a "must consider" for anyone in the market for a small, 3 inch barreled 1911, chambered for the powerful .45 ACP cartridge. Reliability is the most important consideration when shopping for a pistol for personal protection. Accuracy runs a close second to reliability, and the Escort possesses both of those qualities. There are most assuredly trade-offs when using a smaller 1911, but the STI Escort is decidedly one of the better choices in the marketplace today.

Acknowledgments

I can't say enough about Jay Dunlap at STI International. I have been "badgering" him almost weekly since John Caradimas returned home from the SHOT Show. Jay, for your patience, your kindness, your understanding, and most of all, your help, I truly thank you. You are a Gentleman, in the Best sense of the word.

Bill Lamb has put up with me for months. Phone calls, unannounced visits, and requests for obscure gun-related items would have gotten me banned elsewhere. Bill continues to put up with me, to his credit as a fine businessman, and an even better person.

Ivan Walcott and Ray Witham, Jr. at Advanced Tactical Firearms sent me some donated Armscor Precision ammunition some months back, chambered for .45 ACP. Although I'm down to my last 50 round box, I want to sincerely thank both of you gentlemen for your kindness and consideration. You made comprehensive shooting tests more than a reality for me.

Specifications

STI Escort

Caliber: .45 ACP (also available in 9x19)

Frame: Forged Aluminum Officer Length, stippled front strap, Undercut trigger guard

Stocks: Checkered Cocobolo Grip Panels with STI logo

Slide: Round top with rear cocking serrations

Trigger: STI Long Curved Trigger

Barrel: 3" Fully Ramped and supported Bull barrel

Safeties: Single sided, extended shelf thumb safety; STI high-ride Beavertail grip safety W/memory bump

Guide Rod: STI Recoil Master

Sights: 3 Dot (white) Tactical Adjustable Sights

Overall length: 7 inches

Weight (empty): 22.8 ounces

Finish: Duracoat frame, blued slide

Suggested Retail Price: \$1,024.00 U.S. Dollars

You may discuss about this pistol, ask questions or in general discuss about this review, in this thread in our Forums Site:

<http://forum.m1911.org/showthread.php?t=38877>

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