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DERRINGER

KYLE LAMB:
RETICLES

ROCK RIVER'S
NEW X-SERIES

GUNS & AMMO

#EXCLUSIVE

.45 ACP
7+1 CAPACITY

.40 S&W
7+1 CAPACITY

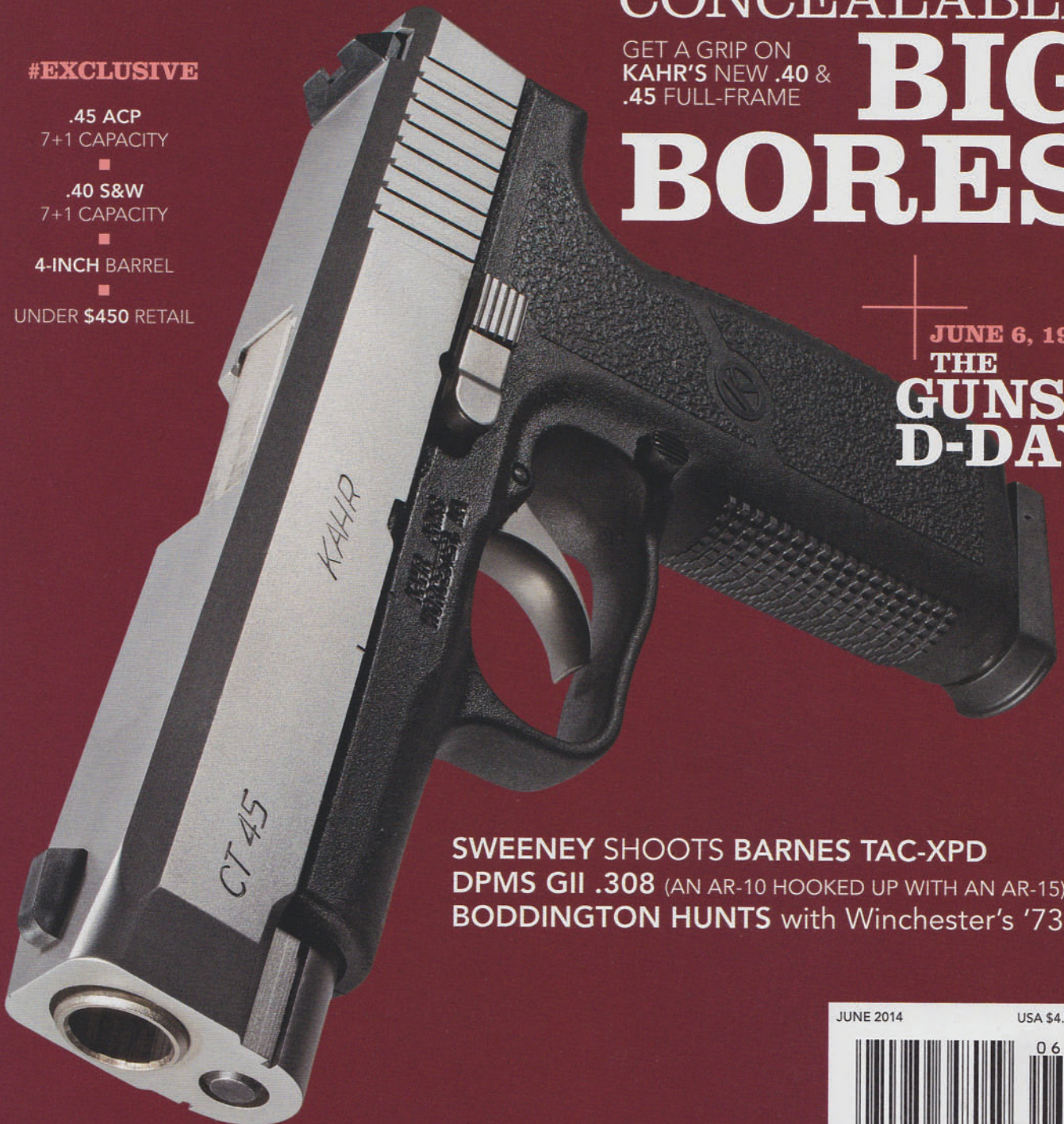
4-INCH BARREL

UNDER \$450 RETAIL

CONCEALABLE GET A GRIP ON KAHR'S NEW .40 & .45 FULL-FRAME

BIG BORES

JUNE 6, 1944:
THE
GUNS OF
D-DAY



SWEENEY SHOOTS BARNES TAC-XPB
DPMS GII .308 (AN AR-10 HOOKED UP WITH AN AR-15)
BODDINGTON HUNTS with Winchester's '73

JUNE 2014

USA \$4.99



gunsandammo.com

Kahr Goes Big

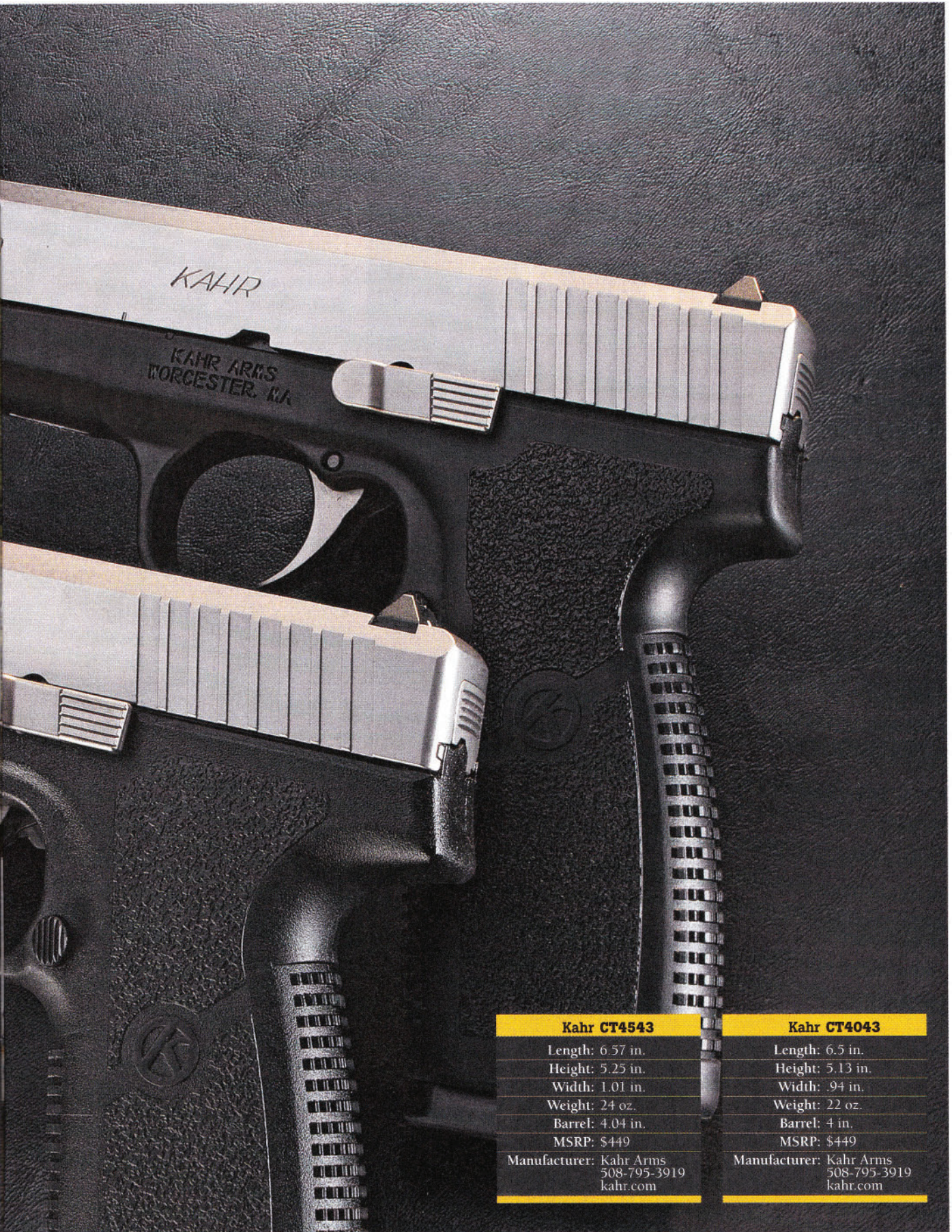
Words by Patrick Sweeney
Photos by Sean Utley

Life is good.

THE PROGRESSION OF FIREARM MODELS has been pretty simple. The new model gets introduced in its full-size glory. Then, once the manufacturer has worked out the bugs and gotten a handle on production, they introduce an intermediate-size version and then later, a compact version. With a few exceptions, that has been pretty much the way things have happened. We have seen some recent pistols unveiled that reversed that process, but the leader in this regard is Kahr.

They started making compact and ultracompact carry pistols back before concealed carry became really popular. Well, it was always popular, but not always possible back in the medium-old days, but Kahr made compact carry pistols anyway. Timing helped. They introduced their K9 just as that miserable failure of a fantasy, the AWB/94, came about, with its 10-round magazine-capacity limit. All of a sudden, those who could carry found high-cap magazines to be fantastically expensive. So, if you are going to be limited to 10-round magazines, why not carry a compact 10-rounder? Since then, Kahr has expanded the lineup, adding calibers, models and sizes, until they had a nearly complete lineup.





Kahr CT4543

Length: 6.57 in.

Height: 5.25 in.

Width: 1.01 in.

Weight: 24 oz.

Barrel: 4.04 in.

MSRP: \$449

Manufacturer: Kahr Arms
508-795-3919
kahr.com

Kahr CT4043

Length: 6.5 in.

Height: 5.13 in.

Width: .94 in.

Weight: 22 oz.

Barrel: 4 in.

MSRP: \$449

Manufacturer: Kahr Arms
508-795-3919
kahr.com

Now the full-size pistols arrive, the CT4043 and the CT4543. They are chambered in, in order, .40 S&W and .45 ACP. As full-size pistols, they are at the edge of concealability and comfort, at least when compared with their predecessors in the Kahr family. Compared with what we were carrying as “compact” pistols (except for Kahrs) a generation ago, they are quite handy in size.

The CT4043 and the CT4543 both feature stainless steel slides and barrels on top of polymer frames. The slides have fixed sights and external extractors, and at first glance you'd think they were striker-fired pistols like so many others. They are not, but more on that in a bit. On the front end, the new pistols have slides that are heavily beveled on their sides. This creates a wedge or taper to the slide that makes it much easier to get back into a holster. Reholstering is sometimes an exercise fraught with peril, as the shooter struggles with a blocky muzzle end of a slide, a holster that has taken that moment to collapse in on itself and the shooter tries to get his gun back out of sight.

Even in the controlled environment of a practice range, the struggles can look pretty ugly and become frustrating. The big bevels on the Kahr slides here make it easier to get the reholstering started (and a proper holster holds its shape, making the process even easier).

The stainless steel slide rides on steel inserts captured in the polymer frame.

The polymer frames are molded with a nonslip texture on the side panels of the grip, so you can keep a good hold on them. Plus, the frontstrap and backstrap of each



The top end of the Kahrs are stainless steel. The slide has an aggressive taper at the muzzle, to aid reholstering.

The new models sport single-stack magazines of seven rounds each. The frames have effective nonslip textures molded into the gripping surfaces.



have an aggressive, nonslip pattern molded in. I wouldn't call it checkering, exactly, as each of the raised patterns is not a pyramid but a rectangular block. The result is a surface that digs into your hand as you grip it and keeps the two Kahrs from slipping around as you shoot. Slipping they would tend to do, as light as they are, had Kahr not been so hard-core about making the frame a nonslip work surface.

As the frame is clearly polymer and can't be stamped with a serial number, Kahr uses a small metal plate with the serial number on it, held in the mold when the polymer is injected into it. That plate is on the underside of the dustcover.

Inside the dustcover is the recoil spring and its guide rod. Behind that, and also inside the polymer frame, are two important items: the magazine and the firing-control parts.

The magazine is a sturdy single-stack design of Kahr's devising. Holding seven rounds, it is long enough to hold their ammo and still have room for a stout magazine spring for reliable feeding. I'm sure there are some who would complain that a full-size pistol in this day and age that does not have a double-stack magazine is somehow lacking, not manly. The problem with high-cap magazines is simple: They add bulk. Kahr decided to get bigger in a way that added a couple more rounds of capacity and aided recoil control without becoming a bulky burden of a defensive tool.

While all the elements of the Kahr pistols are interesting, the firing-control system is the gem of their design. Protected by no less than seven patents, the Kahr pistols have a trigger system that is unlike others. The trigger rotates a cam, and

the cam does a bunch of things at once. It cocks the striker, compressing the striker spring, and it pushes the firing-pin safety out of the path of the firing pin. Then, at the end of its job, it releases the striker while still holding the firing-pin safety out of the way.

It does this with a trigger pull that is unlike your usual striker-fired trigger. In many other designs, you have a lot of scrubby, gritty, scratching movement to get through as the parts slide on each other. Then, the trigger either lets go, into freefall overtravel, or stacks, adding more weight. The Kahr trigger design acts as if it were a tuned double-action revolver trigger. It is the same all the way back until it politely lets the striker leap forward and ignite the primer.

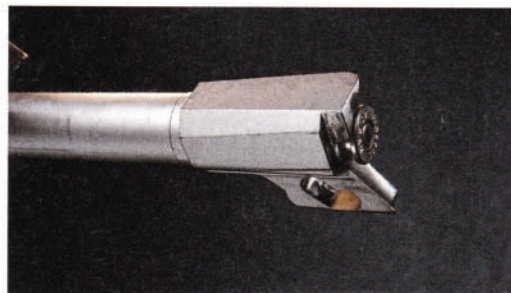
The Kahr firing system does not involve external safeties. There is a slide-stop lever on the left side to either lock open the slide or release it when it is locked back, and that's it for firing controls. The magazine catch is on the left side also, behind the triggerguard. With only those protruding, Kahr pistols are smooth carry pistols, lacking extra parts to hang up on clothes, belt or holster. The uniform and simple trigger stroke is easy to learn and teach.

As a result, shooting a Kahr is often a lot less work than it would be with other trigger designs, as you don't have to fight through the trigger pull while keeping the sights on the target. Instead, it is a simple matter to keep the sights aligned while you press the trigger through its smooth arc.

The firing mechanism is in the frame, behind a panel on the right side. Instead of the usual approach of crosspins holding parts in place, Kahr again took a simple approach. The fire-control parts are inside the frame, and in the rare event that you'd need to gain access to them, you'd simply unbolt the access panel on the right side. As I said, that would be a rare event, as you can easily clean the parts with an aerosol scrubber and lube with a couple of drops of oil.

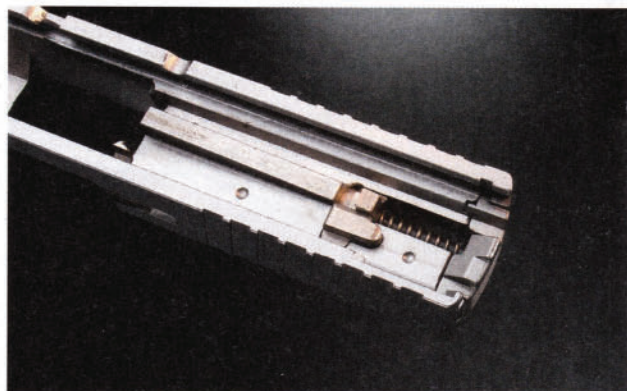
To get there is easy. Unload. Remove the magazine. Retract the slide until the disassembly index line matches the small notch on the frame. This also lines up the clearance cut on the slide with the slide-stop lever. Holding the slide at that point, press the slide-stop lever out front from the right to the left. Once it is off, you can then pull the slide off the frame.

Then, it is like any other pistol. Remove the recoil-spring assembly from the slide/barrel,



The sights are a "dot over bar" design that have worked well for Kahr for nearly two decades. They can be changed for night sights, if you feel the need.

Kahr pistols all use a striker system, and it has a firing-pin safety, but you wouldn't know that from the trigger pull. Pulling the trigger, you'd think it was a box-magazine-fed revolver.



and the barrel comes out. Scrub, spray, wipe clean, apply a few drops of oil, and reassemble by reversing the process.

Since the CT4043 and CT4543 are meant to be daily-carry pistols, I figured the best approach would be to test them with defensive ammo. This common-sense approach made for more work for me, as the range-test session coincided with one of the coldest arctic chills in memory. As nice as the trigger pull of a Kahr pistol is, it is difficult to shoot consistent groups when you can't feel your fingertips. The accuracy testing took much longer than usual simply due to the need to regularly dash back up to the R&D bunker and throw another face cord of wood into the stove.

The results were quite interesting. First of all, both the 40 and 45 are relatively light for their size. At 22 and 24 ounces, they are easy to pack on a daily basis, but that also means they are going to be work to shoot. As luck would have it, they were both most fond of the ammo that was the most robust. The CT4043 preferred the Winchester PDX1 in its 165-grain loading, while the CT4543 preferred the exemplary Hornady Critical Duty. For both, the groups were consistently uniform and smaller than the other loads I had to test. Yours may differ in its tastes, so test a good cross-section of ammunition to find what yours shoots most accurately, but this pair wanted the hottest stuff I could feed them. Lucky me.

That said, the accuracy of the other loads was nothing to sneer at. All were more than capable of the accuracy you'd need in a

PERFORMANCE: CT4043, .40 S&W, 4-in. barrel

LOAD	BULLET WEIGHT (GR.)	VELOCITY (FPS)	SD	ACCURACY (IN.)
SIG Sauer V-Crown	165	1,048	26.4	3.0
Barnes TAC-XPD	140	1,001	8.9	3.0
Winchester PDX1	165	1,059	11.9	2.75

PERFORMANCE: CT4543, .45 ACP, 4.04-in. barrel

LOAD	BULLET WEIGHT (GR.)	VELOCITY (FPS)	SD	ACCURACY (IN.)
SIG Sauer V-Crown	230	884	17.1	3.0
Hornady Critical Duty+P	220	955	15.0	2.5
Remington Defense	230	746	32.9	3.25
Barnes TAC-XPD+P	185	888	26.4	3.0

Notes: Accuracy is the average of four five-shot groups from an MTM rest at 25 yards. Chronograph results using a PACT Mk IV with the screens centered 15 feet from the muzzle; average of 10 shots.

A 22- or 24-ounce pistol is going to have some recoil, especially with proper defensive ammo. But the nonslip texture of the grips will keep the CT4043 or CT4543 in your hands.



KAHR'S SMALLER OPTIONS

All steel, the K40 offers extra mass for recoil reduction, so it doesn't kick as much as you'd think. With its magazines holding six rounds and three of them in the box to start, you have a carry gun ready to go. MSRP \$855



The K9 is compact to carry and holds 7+1 rounds of easy-to-shoot 9mm, all in stainless steel with Kahr wraparound soft polymer grips for even more recoil reduction. MSRP \$855



An ultracompact .40 bruiser, the MK40 combines all-steel construction with a compact slide/barrel and grip frame. Concealment guns used to hold five or six rounds of .38. Now you can have one more .40, but in a similar package. MSRP \$855



The ultimate backup or a pistol for those really hot days, the PM9's stainless steel and polymer construction will shrug off the sweat, pocket lint and/or ankle holster you might subject it to. MSRP \$786



defensive situation, even if they weren't up to the standards needed for Camp Perry. Also, I had no malfunctions during testing. Despite the cold and the fact that the ammo sat out on the shooting bench during all the testing, cold-soaking down to single-digit temperatures on those days, the Kahr pistols chugged on relentlessly.

This should not come as a surprise. Remember, Kahr started with the compact and ultracompact pistols as their baseline. Making an ultracompact pistol work reliably is a much more difficult task than doing so with a full-size one (which is why it used to be common to start with the full-size pistol). Having accomplished that nearly 20 years ago, it was easy for Kahr to make a reliable full-size pistol. As if all this wasn't enough, Kahr has been on a serious production-improvement path for the last few years. As a result, they are able to make more pistols in less time and hold to the quality standards they insist on. What that means for shooters is simple. Despite inflation causing prices to creep up, prices on Kahr pistols have held steady or gone down. They are a better bargain than ever.

So, what can we take from this look at Kahr? The easy lesson to learn is that if you want a controllable and concealable pistol in a caliber that starts with 4, then Kahr has the pistols for you. Now, a minor quibble, if I may. At 4 inches in barrel length, it is stretching the definition of "full size" a bit to hang that designation on these pistols. I come to it from the perspective of having started my concealed carry time packing a humongous Government model. Compared with that, the Kahr CT4043 and CT4543 are still compact carry guns. Compared with the rest of the Kahr line, they *are* full-size guns, so I'll give Kahr that.

But the big advantage here is the trigger. You now have a controllable trigger in a pistol that is big enough to get a firm hold on, and with that combo you can do some really accurate shooting. Plus, if you are in the habit of carrying a backup gun (and if you are serious about carrying at all, it is a good idea to have a spare), you can have your compact backup gun from Kahr as well. It's the same trigger system, so there's no transition to learn, and if you are in a situation where your spare becomes someone else's main gun, then there are easy instructions on use: "Aim, and press the trigger."

As an added bonus, the trigger design allows for a slimmer frame and slide, with the slide on the .40 being less than 1 inch wide. All this and a price that won't break the bank? Where do I sign up?

Kahr. They aren't just micro-guns anymore, and that is a very good thing. **G&A**



The flat proportions and light weight of the Kahr full-size pistols mean they are much more likely to be on you when you need them.

Two controls, the slide-stop lever and the trigger. They make it easy to learn the Kahr and introduce a new shooter to the pistol.

