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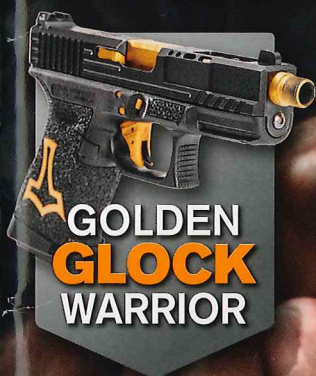
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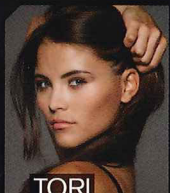
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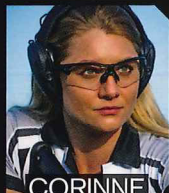
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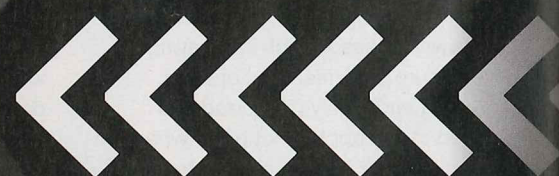
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# UNIVERSAL ENFORCER

## A NEW "HYBRID 9" FROM B&T—STOCKED AND STACKED FOR DEFENSE DUTY

STORY & PHOTOS BY SEAN UTLEY

**W**hen you first look at this new product from Brügger & Thomet, a company based out of Switzerland, you might say it's a pistol. Then you might look again and say it's a personal-defense weapon, or PDW. But it doesn't really matter, because you'd be wrong either way. OK, so maybe it's a carbine? No, it's not that, either. If you were to make a definitive judgement like this in front of anyone from B&T, you'd probably offend them. That's because B&T has dived deep into the conceptualization and design of the Universal Service Weapon, or USW. So far in fact that this gun has its very own classification.

Why all the fuss? PDW, carbine—it's all the same, right? Not exactly. The USW was born for specific users who had a long list of criteria to be met. Consider this: In a world where terrorists can strike at any moment, a challenging dynamic emerges. There is a difference between a terrorist's goals and your average criminals goal's, and the folks at B&T have seriously considered both angles. I'll spare you the details, but just keep in mind that B&T's extensive research found that law enforcement officers, especially those in Europe, needed a weapon that could provide effective hits at extended engagement distances. Not just a weapon, but a weapon system—one with serious operational considerations like reduced size and the ability to be carried in a holster. This means that the weapon is always available without hindering the operator's other duties.

### A SOLID FOUNDATION

With the USW, B&T didn't simply add a stock to a pistol. Instead, the company designed a portable weapon system from the ground up. In order to garner a better appreciation of its design, let's start with the receiver.

We traditionally think of a pistol as having a frame, which is the lower portion of the gun. But the USW actually has an aluminum receiver. Attached to the receiver is the pistol grip and triggerguard, which are made of polymer. The grip and triggerguard are fitted to the USW so well that it's difficult to see where the aluminum receiver starts and stops. It all seems like it's made of the same material. The front portion of the receiver has a NATO accessory rail where an Inforce APL is secured.





The 7-inch-long polymer stock folds to the right side of the USW for easy portability and locks against the receiver with a spring-assisted catch.

The receiver extends roughly 2 inches farther to the rear than a traditional pistol. This robust portion supports the most unique features of the USW, and it might be the core of the weapon. At the rear of the receiver is an attachment point for the folding stock. This thin polymer stock is roughly 7 inches in length.

Pushing up on a button at the rear allows the stock to fold nicely along the right side of the receiver. In this configuration, the operator can only access the decocker and slide stop on the left side. Left-handed users will be out of luck until the stock is locked open again. When folded, the stock snaps securely into an ingenious spring-actuated mechanism that is attached to the receiver just above the accessory rail. This "stock catch" also releases the stock when pushed forward. In other words, the stock deploys quickly without much fumbling.

Also secured to the rear portion of the receiver via six hex-head screws is an optic bridge. This base holds the USW-specific Aimpoint Nano reflex sight, another key feature that makes the B&T USW capable of fast, accurate headshots from over 25 yards. This was intentional because it allows operators to maintain a greater standoff distance when necessary.

Specifically designed for the USW, the Nano affords the user a cleaner sight picture during engagements and allows both eyes to remain open, improving situational awareness. The Nano is quite impressive on its own with a 3.5-MOA dot that is clean and very easy to pick up when shouldering the weapon. It's rugged, too, with water resistance to 25 meters, shock resistance and a minimum battery life of 20,000 hours. The Aimpoint Nano's seven brightness levels should suit the needs of any situation, and adjustments can be made via rubber-encased buttons

on both sides. They have a very tactile feel and are easy to operate even with gloves on. Finally, the Nano's base is secured to the receiver of the USW and does not move. This allows the slide to reciprocate normally without the weight of an optic for greater reliability.

All of the controls are what you'd expect to find on a modern pistol. There is an ambidextrous slide release, and the magazine release is reversible. The USW is a double-action/single-action (DA/SA) weapon, and it utilizes an ambidextrous decocker. Once the USW is charged, it's in SA mode, and the trigger operates like a two-stage unit. The first stage is smooth but not necessarily light as the trigger comes to a solid stop just before the equally smooth 4-pound second stage. If the user isn't ham-fisted, they likely won't blow right through the first stage. The trigger's reset is short as well. Once the decocker is actuated, the initial trigger pull is a very heavy 12 pounds. There are also no external safeties. Overall, the trigger feels great and is easy to get used to.

The slide of the USW is unique as well. The rear of the slide is covered by the optic housing, and you can't charge the weapon by grabbing the rear of the slide like on a traditional pistol. So, B&T significantly flared the front of the slide in front of the ejection port and added deep serrations so that it can be securely grabbed. I found that it was easiest to simply rotate the USW sideways while charging it with my support hand.

The USW uses a 4.17-inch, cold-hammer-forged barrel that is threaded for suppressors. The pistol also uses 17- or 19-round magazines, and an extension can bring that up to 30 rounds. This extended magazine loads into the USW just as easily.

Finally, we come to the holster. Yes, the USW can be carried on your hip just like a pistol. Again, the USW was designed for practical police use. B&T literature claims that from the holster, the operator can draw and fire in less than a second when shooting with the stock folded and less than 1.5 seconds with the stock extended. This portability and access make the USW unprecedented in this regard. It's both a pistol and a shoulder-fired weapon, and it won't hinder your other movements.

SPECIFICATIONS	
B&T USW	
CALIBER:	9mm
BARREL:	4.17 inches
OA LENGTH:	9.96-18.43 inches
WEIGHT:	40.9 ounces (empty)
GRIP:	Polymer
SIGHTS:	Aimpoint Nano
ACTION:	DA/SA
FINISH:	Matte black
CAPACITY:	17+1, 19+1, 30+1
MSRP:	N/A

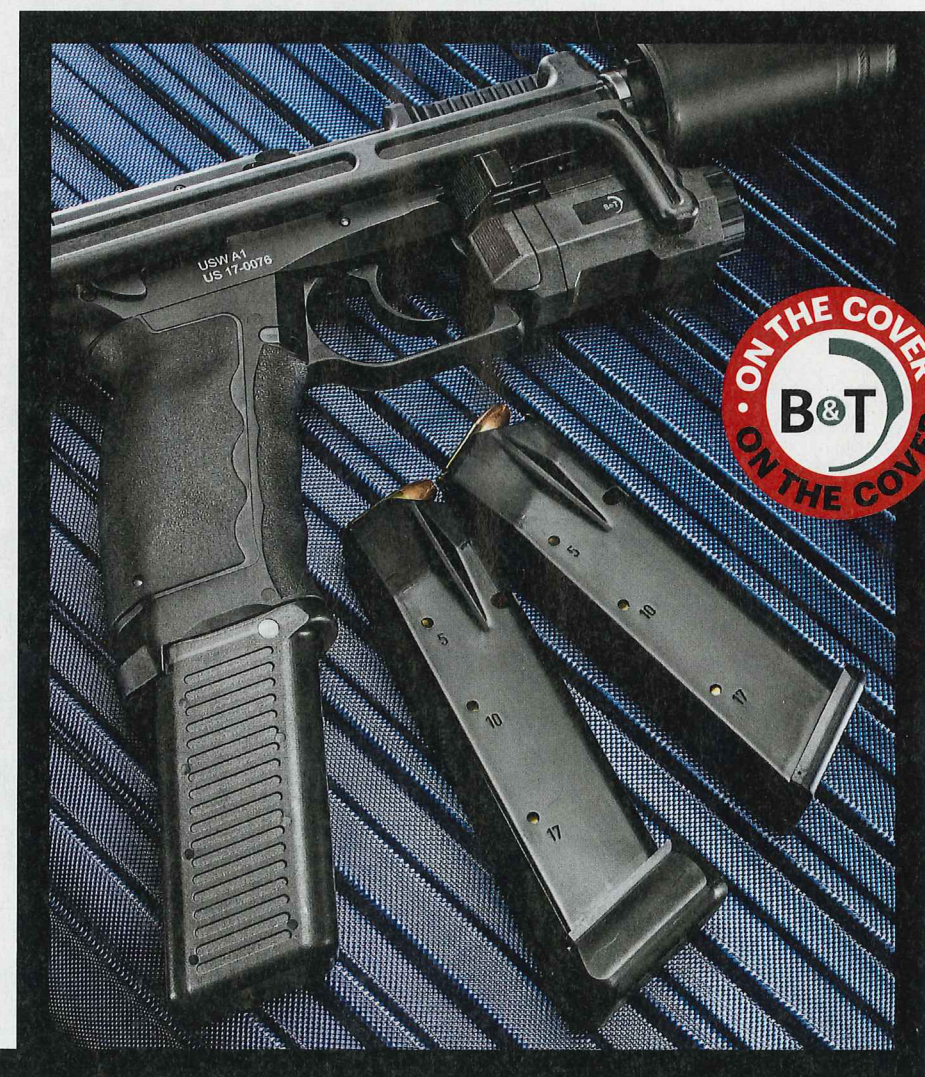
**BELOW:** B&T designed the USW to provide law enforcement officers with plenty of firepower to stop threats at 25 yards. To that end, the weapon uses 17-, 19- and 30-round magazines and can be carried in a holster.

There's no need to hang it from a sling, though B&T has included a sling loop.

## PERFORMANCE TEST

Admittedly, I was a bit skeptical of the USW at first. It's a different concept, and I'm a firm believer in using proper short-barreled rifles (SBRs). Obviously, they are bigger and heavier and not as portable as the USW—not even close. But they are easy to operate. However, after spending some time studying the USW and its features, I began to really see its validity and usefulness.

It's really compact, and individuals with large hands may find difficulty with where to place their support hand. If you try to shoot it like your garden-variety carbine, you could quickly find your thumb extended in front of the muzzle. But if you shoot it like you would a pistol, with your





support hand wrapping around your strong hand, and simply pulling the stock into your shoulder, you won't have any issues.

I was most excited by the thought of the USW as a shoulder-fired weapon, and that's where the testing began. With a SilencerCo Omega 9K riding out front and 147-grain Sig Sauer V-Crown JHPs in the magazine, I shouldered the USW with my hands clasped as I would shoot a pistol and *bang!* The USW hopped up and hit my Oakley sunglasses. I had my face too far forward—aka nose-to-charging-handle

style—and let's just say that's too close. The USW uses a Browning-type action, so there is quite a thump. Also, the stubby stock manages to focus considerable recoil into a tiny section of your shoulder. If I'm being honest, it smarted just a bit.

Readjusting and orienting your face farther back on the stock is a must. A few more rounds, and then I got a couple of malfunctions. The V-Crown JHPs were diving nose-first into the feed ramp. I figured the suppressor was speeding things up too much and not giving the magazine spring

enough time to work. I removed the can and this problem disappeared. This happened with a couple of other shooters, then it ceased. Maybe we weren't doing our part. That said, all of the shooters commented on the nice thump the USW gives your softer parts. This is obviously not an issue for its intended role, but it's not exactly a weapon to use for an all-day training session..


Once we got the Nano zeroed, headshots were easy at 25 yards and beyond. With the right training, the gun will do its part. In fact, we never shot the USW any closer than 25 yards. In pistol mode, the USW is fairly good—a bit heavy, but the recoil feels smooth when it's not up against your shoulder. Again, 25-yard shots on the small IPSC silhouette steel were easy and headshots were marginally more difficult. The Aimpoint Nano is excellent for this.

### WHERE IT FITS

A lot of shooters put rounds through our test USW, including SWAT team operators, a retired Marine scout sniper and IPSC/IDPA competitors. The USW is good as a multi-role fighter, but it's not great in any one category. That being said, it does allow for far more simplified, precisely placed shots at distance compared to a traditional pistol, and after all, that's what it's intended for, not to mention its compactness and go-anywhere capability.

I can see the USW as a home-defense weapon and even a backpack gun. Its convenience and modularity will excel in these roles. But anything beyond necessary familiarization training and short proficiency sessions could wear on the shooter.

The USW will appeal to many, and rightfully so. It is available to civilians in the U.S. in pistol form, which means it won't have the stock, but I speculate that there will eventually be ways to adapt it to an SBR platform. That means filing the appropriate BATFE paperwork. Law enforcement can purchase USWs with stocks.

The USW is true to its roots. It's got that consistent B&T quality that can only be described as Swiss-made excellence. It's a truly unique weapon designed for a specific role. It's a lot of capabilities in a tiny package. For more information, visit [bt-ag.ch](http://bt-ag.ch). 

**Editor's Note:** Check out an exclusive video of the author wringing out the B&T USW on [personaldefenseworld.com](http://personaldefenseworld.com).



The USW's 4.17-inch barrel comes threaded for suppressor use, and the author tested it with one of SilencerCo's compact Omega 9Ks.

### ► PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Sig Sauer 115 FMJ	1,125	2.80
Sig Sauer 147 V-Crown JHP	1,058	1.50
Winchester 115 Silvertip JHP	1,226	1.40

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by chronograph and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 25 yards.

