By Jerry Ahern, Photos by Sharon Ahern

The Centurion 39 pistol is a downsized version of the Century International Arms (www.century-arms.com) Centurion 39 rifle; a fully American made semi-automatic only AK-47 manufactured from all new USA parts. It would be woefully simplistic to say that and nothing more, however, since the Centurion 39 pistol has a wealth of attributes unique to the pistol and quite different from the rifle. One feature of the Centurion 39 pistol which needs to be addressed immediately is potentially a serious legal concern and must be understood in order to avoid a world of trouble from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

I happily own a Centurion 39 rifle, to which a modular vertical fore grip can be legally attached. If I were really way less than bright, I could attach a vertical fore grip to the Centurion 39 pistol. Why “less than bright?” By attaching a vertical fore grip to any handgun at all, no matter how the attachment is achieved, by ATF standards, I would be converting said handgun into an “Any Other Weapon.” Probably one of the most obvious Any Other Weapon examples is a cane gun. Looking at a cane gun, one might not readily realize that it was something more than an innocent cane. The idea behind the concept of Any Other Weapon seems to be altering the appearance of the firearm to look like something it is not. If you want a better definition, check through ATF regulations and I’m sure you’ll find one. The point is, putting a vertical fore grip on a pistol, thus changing it to an Any Other Weapon, means the pistol will require special Federal Licensing and Federal tax. Merely having such an item – the pistol actually joined to the fore grip – in your possession instantly places you in violation of Federal and possibly some state laws. Instead, use that wonderful Quad rail found on the Centurion 39 pistol to good purpose.

The Centurion 39 rifle was a project – a highly successful one, as far as I understand – to build a totally American made semi-automatic AK-47 from all American made parts, a highest quality semi-auto AK-47 to satisfy the growing AK-47 market with something not featuring a mix of USA-made and overseas parts. The rifle looks great and my copy shoots great. I added a Crimson Trace MVF-515G Modular Vertical Fore Grip green laser and light that is designed for AR-15/M-16 rifles. It is a fine unit – on my rifle.

Century International Arms had been selling pistol versions of their USA/overseas AKs for some time. It seemed only logical to offer a truly unique pistol version of the American made Centurion 39. We’ve already mentioned the Quad rail, part of the really sharp looking furniture. The receiver is machined from a solid block of steel. The pistol grip is ergonomically designed and extremely comfortable. The trigger is from Tapco. The front sight and the gas block are integrated one with the other, the front sight a very attractively sculpted blade. The compensator is of the birdcage style as found on M-16 rifles and certain other weapons. Front and rear sling swivels are provided. Any standard AK magazines, whether 30-round stick, high-capacity drum or lower-capacity magazines for benchrest shooting, will work with the Centurion 39 pistol. The pistol comes with two USA origin 30-round magazines and a Bulldog case, which not only floats, but also features a sling for handy carrying of the weapon while cased. Century International Arms is a privately owned American business and proud of it, having just celebrated its 50th (1961-2011) year. Like the Centurion 39 rifle, the Centurion 39 pistol is proudly engraved on the left side of the receiver with an American flag and the inscription “MADE IN USA.”

And, it shoots great.

Sharon and I took both Federal and Winchester 7.62 x 39mm ammo with us to The Firing Lane indoor range in Bogart, Georgia, just outside Athens. Albeit the Centurion 39 pistol is a pistol, since it fires rifle ammunition we were on the two-position indoor rifle range. I otherwise treated the...