By Duane Thomas

When Heckler & Koch was designing their 45 Compact (no, that’s not a typo, the gun’s actual model designation has no decimal point in front of the “45”) they were very smart in asking two famous firearms instructors, Larry Vickers and Ken Hackathorn, for input.

For a while, HK planned to introduce their own 1911 .45 auto. At the time they were phasing out the P7, and given their in-house forging capability it seemed to make sense to transition that over to building a steel-framed 1911. Larry Vickers (former Delta Force which used the 1911) and Ken Hackathorn (former Green Beret, current SWAT trainer, and long-term 1911 fan and user, as well) were both brought in to advise. However by the time HK was ready to get serious about building 1911s, Smith & Wesson and SIG had both introduced such guns. Ken and Larry both recommended to HK that, as Hackathorn puts it, “Introducing one more high-priced 1911 pistol was a bad idea,” that they needed to stick with what they do best, i.e. design a polymer-framed auto pistol, in this case wrapping their P2000’s ergonomic improvements (versus the USP which, while impressively reliable, is not a gun famous for its ergonomics) around the .45 ACP cartridge.

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Ken Hackathorn describes the HK45C as being “a P2000 on steroids.” This is a chunky little gun, however its overall size is not huge, well within the realm of possibility for concealed carry. Vickers and Hackathorn both liked the P2000’s streamlined slide profile versus the USP’s more blocky, angular profile, and lobbied (successfully) for both that and front slide cocking grooves.

Larry and Ken also wanted, and got, both front and rear sights fitted into cross dovetail cuts. Sights are of the three-dot configuration, with the dots per se quite a bit larger than we’re used to seeing on other marques, an HK trait going all the way back to the P7.

The trigger guard features a raised hump in its center/bottom interior, intended as a visual aid to make it obvious whether the gun is in double-action or single-action mode. If the trigger is even with the hump it’s in DA, if it’s significantly behind the hump it’s in SA. Both Hackathorn and Vickers lobbied hard for doing away with the “hump,” however this was one of the few areas in which HK went HK instead of Vickers/Hackathorn. Some people find the hump abrades the underside of their trigger finger and interferes with smooth trigger pulls. Speaking of which, my sample HK45C’s DA trigger pull went 10.5 pounds, SA was 5.75 pounds, according to my NRA weight set; both DA and SA were quite smooth.

The Heckler & Koch 45 Compact, a nine-shot .45 ACP, is a further evolution of that company’s USP-pattern auto pistol family.

The HK45C’s sights are highlighted with large, light yellow dots. An attempt at night sights from a country in which tritium vials are illegal except for spec ops teams, this paint has very little light-holding qualities.

The HK45C’s barrel carries forward the rubber O-ring system found on the big Mark 23 Mod O Offensive Handgun Weapon System (OHWS).

Vickers and Hackathorn lobbied for (and got) a Picatinny rail system at variance to the Picatinny equipment rail on earlier model HK pistols.