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The Summer Gun

By Mike Johnson, "Behind the Gun Counter"

For most of our customers seeking a handgun for self-defense, concealment is important. Until summer rolls around, that means something about the size of the Springfield XD Service Model. Concealing a handgun requires carefully choosing the right clothing, the right holsters and the right gun. Exacerbating this problem, summer heat has all of us losing some of those layers that work so effectively at concealing our carry pieces. Summer has us needing, or at least wanting, a smaller gun. How small can we really go?

Mouse Guns

About five years ago a woman asked me if we had any .45's. Against my better judgment, I asked her if there was any reason why she wanted a .45 in particular. Looking like she had just seen a family member abducted by aliens while frog gigging in the swamp, she said, "A friend of mine shot her boyfriend seven times with her .32 and he still beat her up." Sometimes people tell you just a little more than you want to know. Even if you haven't seen the mother ship, are you sure you really want to trust your life to a .22 long rifle, .25 ACP or .32 ACP?

Semiautos

For better or worse, the semiauto has all but replaced the revolver for self-defense. Many want a semiauto because they think revolvers are "old-fashioned." Others simply want a gun as similar as possible to their primary carry gun. Many of the manufacturers have recognized this demand in the market and have provided sub-compact counterparts to their compact or duty sized firearms. These guns are typically about three-fourths of an inch shorter in the grip and barrel. For a lot of people this is the most sensible formula.

If you still find yourself needing less gun, the

single-stack semiauto is the next logical choice. The current crop of single-stack sub-compact semiautos are limited to 1911's, the Glock 36, the new S&W Chief Special series, and several models from Kahr. Kahr, an American company based in Worcester, Massachusetts, probably offers the widest range of choices for a semi-automatic summer carry guns in 9mm, .40 S&W and .45 ACP. With the exception of their T-Series of guns, the Kahrs are smaller than the other single-stack guns listed above. The K9 is 6" long, just under an inch wide and 4-1/2" high and weighs 25 ounces with an unloaded magazine. The P9 is virtually identical in external dimensions and weighs 17.7 ounces with an unloaded magazine. The PM and MK series guns are 5.3" long and 4" high and weigh 15.9 ounces and 24 ounces respectively. In the real world this means these guns are flatter and more comfortable than anything else on most gun store shelves for under \$700. That's what sells the Kahrs at our store. People don't just look at them; they try them on for size. If someone is so inclined, we grab a couple of holsters off of the shelf and let people try them on. We encourage them to sit down on one of the sofas or chairs in our shop, and to look in the mirror to see how the gun prints while standing in different positions. With six shots in .40 S&W and seven shots in 9mm, the P9/40 and K9/40 also offer enough of a grip surface for most people to get all of their fingers on the grip. This helps make the Kahr a much more shootable gun. So why doesn't everybody own a sub-compact semiauto?

Something that rarely appears in print is how most semiautos can be disabled by simply pushing them out of battery. In a very ugly, very close assault a body part pressed against the muzzle can

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