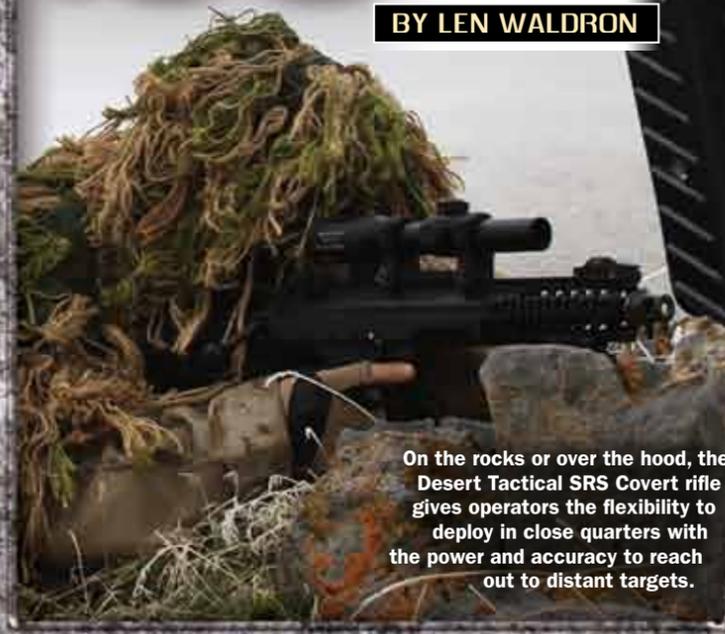


Alongside the DTA Stealth Recon Scout (left), the .308 Covert has a bullpup design to reduce the overall length to 28 inches while still maintaining a 16-inch barrel. Here it's equipped with a Horus Blackbird 1.5-8x24 scope.

DYNAMIC COVERT .308

BY LEN WALDRON



On the rocks or over the hood, the Desert Tactical SRS Covert rifle gives operators the flexibility to deploy in close quarters with the power and accuracy to reach out to distant targets.



THE UNORTHODOX DTA BULLPUP SRS HITS MAGPUL DYNAMIC'S PRECISION RIFLE COURSE!

» Modern warfare has not seen a sniper/counter-sniper environment of this type since the battle for Stalingrad. The open desert and urban environments of Iraq, the crags and peaks of Afghanistan, paired with an unconventional insurgent enemy, created a vast battlefield of long-range engagements at the individual soldier's level. But unlike the force-multipliers of previous conflicts, modern snipers and their spotters are a highly trained, tightly specialized and integrated part of both tactical and strategic operations—registering kills at over 2,600 yards. From this environment, the precision rifle community has seen advances in optics, ballistics, munitions and doctrine. Lessons learned have taken military, law enforcement and recreational shooters to new levels of proficiency. Magpul Dynamics brings one warrior of that battlefield, former Marine Scout Sniper Caylen Wojcik, and the lessons of those conflicts to today's precision shooter.



Tailor-made for the urban SWAT sniper, the DTA Covert can deploy quickly, fully assembled, from within vehicles.

I traveled to the Cascade Mountain Range outside Yakima, Washington, to attend the Magpul Dynamics (MD) Precision Rifle 1 course. Precision Rifle 1 is a three-day course designed to teach the entry-level shooter more about his precision rifle than he ever imagined, as well as imbue him with a working knowledge of marksmanship, ballistics and range estimation. For this course, I ran the Desert Tactical Arms SRS Covert, a bolt-action bullpup-style sniper rifle chambered in .308 with an overall length of just over 28 inches.

UNORTHODOX SNIPER

"Is that the FN P90 sniper rifle?"

"I didn't know the storm troopers were using bolt guns."

These were just a few of the initial comments I got from fellow shooters. I have to admit, the DTA Covert breaks from the common notion of how a sniper rifle should look. It's short, thick, and it has a rail that runs nearly to the end of the barrel. Upon first glance, one fellow student pointed to

the muzzle and asked if that's where the barrel screws on. Copying what everyone else had done was not what Desert Tactical Arms had in mind when they designed the SRS Covert, a sniper rifle with an overall length of just over 28 inches—yet its barrel is 16 inches long.

DTA started its line of bullpup-inspired sniper rifles with the Stealth Recon Scout, drawing inspiration from the AMP DSR-1 used by the German GSG-9. According to LTC Dave Liwanag (ret.), head of military sales for DTA, "The challenge was utilizing the inherent design advantages of the bullpup's rearward bolt orientation to facilitate a longer barrel that could deliver higher muzzle velocities while still not increasing the rifle's overall length." These elements became increasingly relevant with the publication of SOCOM's PSR requirement that mandated a .338-caliber rifle that can defeat Level III body armor at 750 yards and an individual soldier at 1,500 yards. To accomplish this task at the required ranges, a 300-grain bullet must be driven by muzzle velocities that a shorter barrel struggles to produce. The SRS Covert design satisfies the chambering issue and can accommodate the longer barrel without exceeding the overall length requirements. The next natural extension of the bullpup design was to utilize a traditional barrel length to create an ultra-short yet highly accurate sniper rifle that would both facilitate movement in close quarters and vehicles as well as reduce the visual signature of a sniper moving into an area.

With its 16-inch barrel, the Covert features the same quality elements as the stan-



The Covert's reduced length means it has a significantly reduced signature. Operators can conceal the entire thing in a pack.

**THE COVERT ACCOMPLISHES ITS MISSION:
A 28-INCH LONG SNIPER RIFLE WITH SUB-MOA ACCURACY UP
TO AND INCLUDING 800 YARDS.**

dard Scout. It has a match-grade chamber and trigger, match-grade free-floated barrel, and a "return to zero" mounting system. The buttstock is adjustable with spacers to customize the length of pull, and the full-length rail system will accommodate all manner of optics.

Thom Daugherty, a SWAT sniper with the Cottonwood Heights, Utah, Police Department chose the Covert both for its size and multi-caliber capabilities. "It grouped phenomenally in trials and we liked the way it gave us a smaller platform to carry, as our snipers often operate as independent teams. We are also a mountain station, so having the ability to convert to a

bipod (hard), the shooter should find soft ground for the leg's base. In other words, hard legs on concrete does not make for a solid platform the shooter can load for a controlled shot or manage recoil. Seems simple, but it's critical.

From a solid base, we work into properly seating the weapon and physical alignment with the rifle. Again, the Magpul Dynamics doctrine is consistent and methodical. Work from the feet forward. Are your ankles flush with the ground? Are your hips aligned directly behind the weapon (no green plastic Army man cant)? Are your hands and elbows in a position to manipulate the



**SPECIFICATIONS
DTA SRS COVERT**

CALIBER:	.308 Winchester
BARREL:	16 inches
OA LENGTH:	28.25 inches
WEIGHT:	9.7 pounds (empty)
STOCK:	Glass-filled polymer
SIGHTS:	Optics-ready Picatinny rail
ACTION:	Bolt
FINISH:	Hardcoat anodized
CAPACITY:	5
MSRP:	\$3,072

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	ACCURACY
Barnes 168 VOR-TX BT	0.97
Black Hills 175 OTM	0.66
Black Hills 178 OTM	0.71
Hornady 168 TAP PFD	0.85
Hornady 168 A-MAX	1.10
Winchester 168 HP BT Match	0.99

Note: Bullet weight measured in grains and accuracy in inches for 5-shot groups at 100 yards.

SHOOTING FORM

Precision shooting is as much method and science as it is an art form. The first principle Magpul Dynamics teaches is consistency. In this context, consistency is the removal of all human factors that can impair the fixed mechanical elements of the rifle and optics.

Wojcik teaches the shooter to think from the muzzle backward. Is the rifle oriented properly? Is the bipod set and adjusted to the proper tension? Can the shooter load, unload and operate the weapon system within his shooting space? If the position does not allow for a bipod, how is the weapon secured? The concept is "hard on soft or soft on hard." This means that if the weapon's stock (hard) is resting on a surface, it should be soft (a rucksack, for example). If the weapon is resting on a

weapon? Is your grip placing any unnecessary tension on the weapon's alignment? Wojcik teaches a "thumbs off" method for the trigger hand where minimal contact with the stock is optimal. Further, fine adjustment of the sight alignment should be made by the support hand manipulating a shooting bag (sand or beanbag) under the heel of the stock, not by muscling the weapon.

CIRCLE OF COMPONENTS

Accurate and consistent shooting is a marriage of multiple factors. Wojcik refers to these elements as the "Circle of Components": Rifle, fundamentally capable of 1-MOA accuracy or less; Optics, capable of repeatable adjustments; Ammunition, consistent and reliable; and the Shooter, capable of appropriate inputs.

Precision shooting training is about harmonizing the shooter's skills with his weapon system. To this end, it's important to point out that familiarity with one's equipment and setup is critical to deriving value from quality training. Unlike pistol or carbine training, quality precision shooting depends upon proper functioning of all the above elements. The shooter is there to train, but the entire circle of components must be in proper functioning order for optimal learning. Where a slightly bent sight post or bad ammo might not be a significant hindrance with other weapon types, inconsistent ammo, a defective or poor quality rifle, or cheap optics will derail precision shooting.

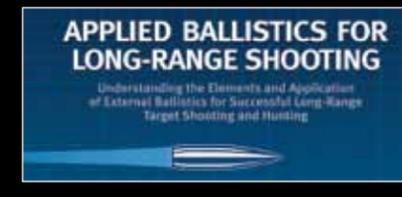
A serious shooter should arrive with quality components and be prepared to service his system if problems arise. This means familiarity with his optics—how to properly mount and remove his scope, adjust turrets, set a zero stop, and adjust eye relief and parallax. For ammunition, this means an understanding of how his weapon handles various manufacturers' loads and which are most appropriate for the distance to and type of target to be engaged. In short, showing up to learn means preparing one's kit properly and bringing tools to fix problems where necessary. And with precision rifles, this is as important as an even trigger squeeze.

BULLET TRAVEL

Ballistics to the average shooter may be little more than a few numbers on an ammo box that tell the buyer where the bullet might strike at a measured distance. For snipers, competitors, or long-range hunters, mastering the principals of external ballistics (how the bullet behaves after it exits the barrel) is critical. The MD Precision Rifle 1 course walks the students through the concepts

BALLISTIC BEATERS

Ballistics can be an overwhelming topic. Equations and tables can lose even the most serious student. Brian Litz, chief ballisticsian for Berger Bullets and a former Air Force missile design engineer, wrote *Applied Ballistics for Long Range Shooting* to "help the average shooter understand and take full advantage of the existing state of the art by using accurate data, and employing the most appropriate tools available to solve the problem."



BALLISTICS BREAKDOWN: Litz breaks down the underlying concepts of external ballistics, ballistic performance analysis, and the properties of bullets in a methodical and simplified way. While supported by mathematics, each section is explained in a practical, applicable and understandable manner. Additionally, Litz supplies a new version of his Point Mass Ballistic Solver as well as experimental test data on 236 long-range bullets of all popular brands. (appliedballisticsllc.com)

WHIZ WHEEL CALCULATOR: From Accuracy 1st Development Group and the mind of Todd Hoddnett, instructor to special operations snipers, champion precision rifle shooter and designer of modern shooting reticles, comes the Whiz Wheel,



a powerful yet simple ballistics calculator that can be customized to a specific bullet and rifle. The Whiz Wheel computes 0.1-mil or 0.25-MOA resolution for elevation and windage corrections out to the transonic range as well as solutions for high-angle adjustments. While the math behind its calculations is complicated, using the Whiz Wheel is not, and even the most advanced shooter can rely on its accuracy to back up or replace their electronic ballistic calculators. Best of all—no batteries are required. (accuracy1stdg.com; 317-834-5480)

of ballistic coefficients (how efficiently the bullet flies through the air), weather, gravity and barometric pressure. While most students have some academic understanding, the practical application of ballistics were ingrained in each shooter as the training continued. From zeroing to sight adjust-

ments and wind calls, the interrelationships of the bullet and the external environment are constantly reinforced. With firing positions taught, zeroes confirmed and ballistics covered, the course then opens to range estimation and wind calls. The course is taught in intervals with

classroom work on a whiteboard under a tent just to rear of the firing line so students can immediately return to their weapons and implement the concepts. This proximity accelerates the learning curve, allowing the instructors to ramp up the evolutions with more complex scenarios and longer ranges.

»» SNIPER TESTFIRE

We were shooting in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains. The wind, combined with the various terrain features, creates a constant, but not prohibitive, challenge to each evolution. I suspect Magpul Dynamics plans it this way, as students quickly become more confident and accurate with their wind calls. Ultimately, we ranged and engaged 18-inch steel targets out to 1,148 yards. Some of us had first-round hits, others didn't, but we all learned along the way and hit targets beyond what most had ever considered possible, along with crushing targets inside of 500 yards with boring regularity.

SRS COVERT IMPRESSIONS

By far, I had the most compact rifle on the firing line, and to see how this writer would shoot with this strange looking rifle was a bit of a curiosity to the class. Appearances aside, the Covert fits well to the shoulder (it has a wide and tall buttstock) and its pistol grip and safety control are in an intuitive location. The biggest hurdle with this platform is the bolt cycling process. Because of the bullpup design, the bolt seats near the cheekweld and cycles almost all the way to the buttplate. My service time was not spent with a rifle that fed from behind my chin. It's a big bolt knob, and the action requires some chicken-winging to get the bolt far enough to the rear to complete the feed and extraction process. After some practice, the new motion became comfortable. From this point forward, running the gun is just like any other bolt-action rifle. As tested, this model came equipped with a Leupold Mark 4 scope with a mil-dot reticle and elevation only adjustable to 1 MOA. As writers, we have to play it where it lies, but I think this rifle is capable of shooting tighter groups if matched with a more precise optic.

The trigger was crisp and intuitive, and the Harris bipod more than handled the load. The five-round magazine had no issues. The rifle was very accurate out to the advertised 800-yard range and did very well on steel in the 400- to 500-yard range. Grouping was as advertised, and I enjoyed the challenge of adapting to an unorthodox platform. As to the form following function, the Covert accomplishes its mission: a 28-inch long sniper rifle with sub-MOA accuracy up to and including 800 yards.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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