



CREATE THE MODERN COMBAT PISTOL

This time we're exceptionally pleased to be joined again by two expert guest contributors as Roger Eckstine and James Preston, Director of Training for Preston Tactical share with PMCI some quick Upgrades for Glock handguns by Lone Wolf Distributing and XS Sights.

The idea of law enforcement professionals training civilians often means limiting the scope of methods and protocol that can be shared with the public. But with the rise of terrorism and active shooter/active attack events along with the proliferation of private citizens licensed to carry, the need to disseminate more information regarding response, engagement, trauma care and linking up with police is becoming imperative.

In the aftermath of the Sutherland, Texas church shootings requests are pouring in from private groups to formulate plans of action. Recently, Preston Tactical of East Texas, USA hosted individuals seeking to form a response team consisting of churchgoers who also happened to be experienced competitive shooters. The course of instruction offered many lessons on decision-making and problem solving during chaotic, violent attacks with the focus on saving as many lives as possible. One student arrived with a Glock 17 that had been enhanced with an over the counter complete lower receiver and night sights.



Carried in a BlackPoint Leather Wing holster the customised G17 mirrored a rising trend in specialised units and the private military contractor community. Preston Tactical's offering of the Solo Active Attack Response course turned out to be an ideal proving ground for Lone Wolf's Timberwolf frame and the latest night sights from XS Sight Systems.

When it comes to the U.S. and world police handgun markets Glock pistols are best sellers. Glocks are easily maintained, the armourer's course is short and given the small number of tools and spare parts necessary for repair, field maintenance is simple. But when it comes to which handguns are considered for the next great sidearm for the United States military the name Glock fades into the background. Nevertheless, when it comes to handguns preferred by specialised units around the

world deployment of Glock pistols is actually becoming more prevalent.

There are several reasons why the Glock pistol is making its mark in replacing other well-known handguns. For example, tasked with securing the run-up to the 2004 Olympics Greek special operations including the DYK combat swimmers chose Glock pistols enhanced with sub-aqua firing pin cups and a heavier spring kit.

Combat swimmers across the globe favor Glock including the SBS or Boat Troops of the SAS. Glock's resistance to water was highlighted more recently during high water rescues necessitated by the flooding rains of Hurricane Harvey that lingered over Houston, Texas in 2017. Law Enforcement worked tirelessly in high water to rescue citizens and arrest looters. The need for a duty weapon that would function properly even after extended exposure to water and muck was essential and the polymer framed Glocks served with distinction.

Thanks to the war on terror pistols are no longer considered mere backup to the long gun because handguns can be carried constantly. The appeal of Glock pistols has increased due to several factors such as the need for reliability in harsh terrain. The war in Afghanistan, for example, has fostered a switch to Glock for several different units including British forces. Those working in advisory and training capacities have found that employing the same pistols as those used by indigenous military personnel has proven invaluable in shortening the learning curve. And durability, specifically of the 9mm Glock pistols, has been helpful in allowing personnel to take part in more extensive training without interruption.

The growing popularity of Glock pistols for military service has somewhat covertly been reflected in changes made to the company's civilian offerings. The Gen 4 Glock pistols feature a pointed texture that favors the soldier who wears gloves over the civilian who may carry concealed, inside the waistband for instance. In what was only an option at first the short framed "SF" models offered a smaller circumference grip with a shorter distance from the backstrap to the trigger. The Gen 4 series are essentially SF pistols with add-on panels that can be applied to enlarge the grip when so desired. Indeed, the changes to

Glock ergonomics, i.e. how the pistol connects with the hand is undoubtedly the most significant characteristic in terms of the evolution of Glock handguns.

Grip reduction is helpful to accommodate shooters with smaller hands but also to improve grip angle and afford more variation in how the trigger may be indexed. When it comes to changing what arrives new-in-box practical shooting competitors lead the way. Individuals have customized the Glock grip frame by shaving off the finger grooves, leveling the palm swell, reducing the overall circumference of the grip, undercutting the trigger guard, hollowing out the area above the web of the hand and creating an extended beavertail to increase control and eliminate slide bite. Not to mention changing the surface texture by sanding, adding grip tape, or even poking dimples into the polymer using a soldering iron. All of the above have proved effective but not after many frames were ruined in the process or left broken from the forces of repeat fire. Some tried and true methods have emerged however and the practice of grip reduction has become a cottage industry for the small time smith as well as more established gunsmithing houses that now find themselves servicing Glock owners almost as often as they do the 1911 enthusiast. The cost of modifying grip contour, retexturing and adding some measure of beavertail is typically in the US\$150 range plus or minus shipping. It just so happens that new polymer frames meeting the very specifications shooters favor most are available from Lone Wolf Distributors for Glock 19, Glock 17 (and related models) for a list price of US\$149.95.

ENHANCEMENT

When it comes to enhancing Glocks for the competitive shooter Lone Wolf was one of the first players in the game. So instead of modifying a spare box-stock G17 Gen III pistol a complete Timberwolf grip frame including all the proper mechanisms that work below the barrel and slide was chosen for test. Featuring Lone Wolf's Ultimate Adjustable Trigger (adjustable for pre-travel and overtravel) the complete receiver sells for US\$249. The trigger shoe was rendered from 6061 billet aluminum and finished in satin stainless to match the remaining action components. A Lone Wolf magwell upgrade (US\$59) was added consisting of

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a funnel-like guide machined from anodized aluminum. The guide mated readily with the grip, held in place by a solid pin. Trigger shoe and magazine well are available in a number of colors but it was decided to avoid bling for what was intended to be a combat pistol.

The stock top end fit smoothly on to the Timberwolf frame despite offering a tighter fit than the original receiver. Bare in mind the subject pistol was only about 100 rounds shy of new-in-box. Trigger pull was set at about 4.8 pounds and the action was very smooth. The trigger shoe offered large radiused edges that proved a welcome upgrade. But it was the smaller circumference and vertical angle of the grip that made the biggest difference to the shooter. The Timberwolf frame offered a 3 slot accessory rail that was more usable than the original underlug. Two sections of backstrap were provided, one offering a slight palm swell and the other a flat profile. The enhanced magazine well not only smoothed the reloading process but offered additional purchase. Comfort and controllability were vastly improved thanks to the Timberwolf frame sitting lower in the hand. This was achieved primarily by extending the back strap higher up into the beavertail. The extension of the beavertail helped protect the web of the hand and increase support reducing the amount of time between shots.

The stock sights were swapped out for a set of F8 night sights, US\$142 from XS Sights of Fort Worth, Texas. The F8 configuration offers increased peripheral vision with a large tritium dot up front and a smaller single tritium dot located below the rear notch. The F8 sights are tall enough to look past a suppressor that might otherwise interfere with vision. In dim light the desired big-dot-over-small-dot sight picture was bold and easy to find. Initially the student was concerned the comparatively open sight picture might be too coarse for fine accuracy. But by the end of the day the he was able to hit small steel targets standing unsupported from the 35-yard line with a full magazine's worth of ammunition at rapid fire pace.

According to the shooter his breakthrough in controlling the sights came during one of the more realistic

scenarios that required engaging a hostage taker with a headshot. The lesson was, leave the tritium for dim light and trust the notch and post in daylight.

Throughout the life of the Timberwolf/Glock 17 (standing at about 1900 rounds as of this writing) no stoppages of any kind have been encountered. The oversized magazine release still jettisons spent mags with rocket-like projection without being so large it scrapes the shooter's palm or releases magazines by accident. And between the magazine guide, the beavertail and the flat sided grip the Timberwolf offers the sensation of wearing the pistol rather than holding it. The internals still look new and wipe down easily. Slide to frame fit is without play. Nothing has worked loose and the integrity of the trigger safety remains sure. The trigger pull continues to maintain about 4.75 pounds of resistance.

Choosing a Timberwolf frame or complete receiver instead of a grip reduction process makes a lot of sense from the standpoint of structural integrity and overall value. If you already have a Glock tuned to your liking you can simply replace the polymer grip and get the benefits of a custom reduction with your desired trigger pull. If you've purchased an older Glock out of service you can bring it up to date or refresh with parts from Lone Wolf. Or, you can stow the complete lower and keep it as a spare while transforming your handgun into what is becoming the modern combat pistol.

James Preston is a Texas Peace Officer who holds a Master Peace Officer certification and a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice. James currently owns Preston Tactical where he trains law enforcement, government personnel, and qualified civilians. Go to www.PrestonTactical.com for details. Roger Eckstine is author of *The Shooter's Bible Guide to Home Defense*, *The Shooter's Bible Guide to Knives and Watch Your Back*, *How to Avoid the Most Dangerous Moments in Daily Life*. www.Skyhorsepublishing.com