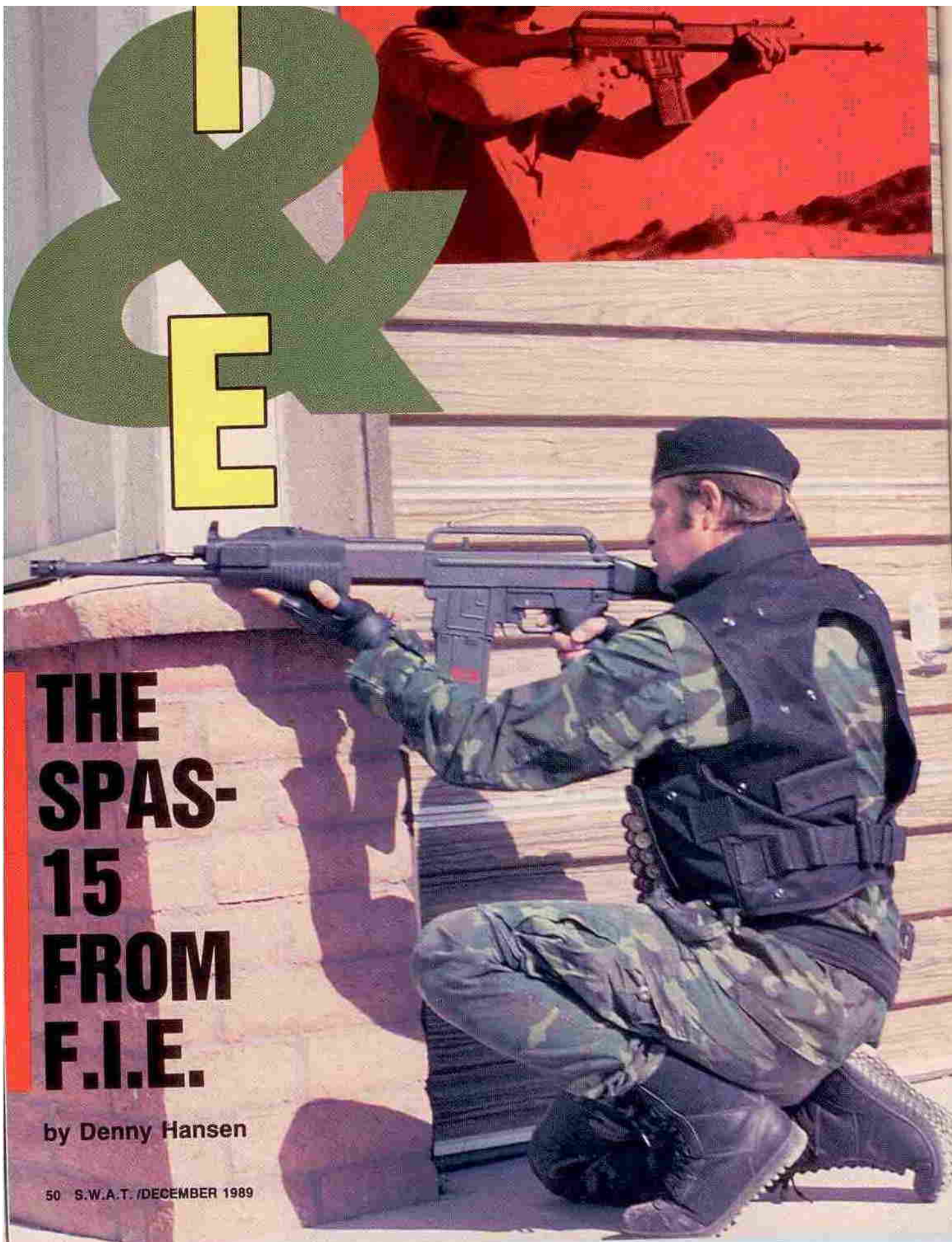
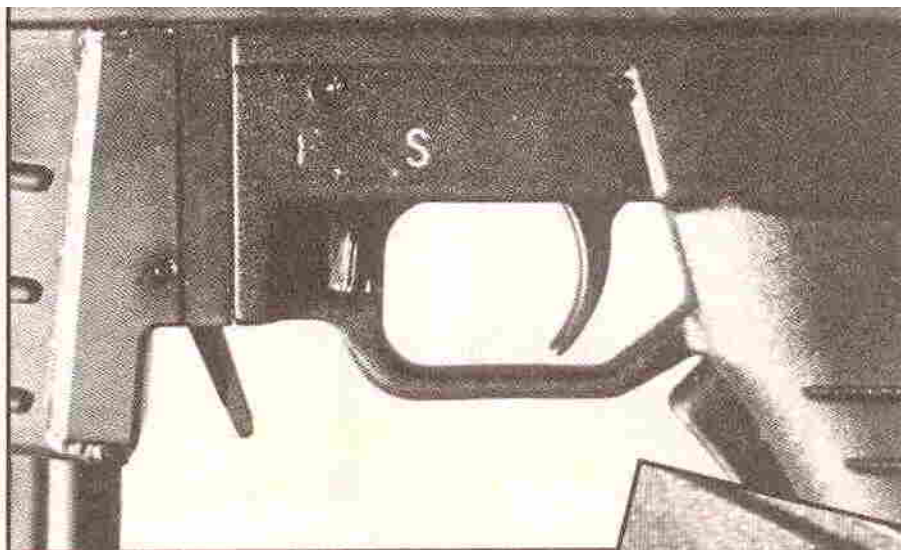




THE SPAS- 15 FROM F.I.E.

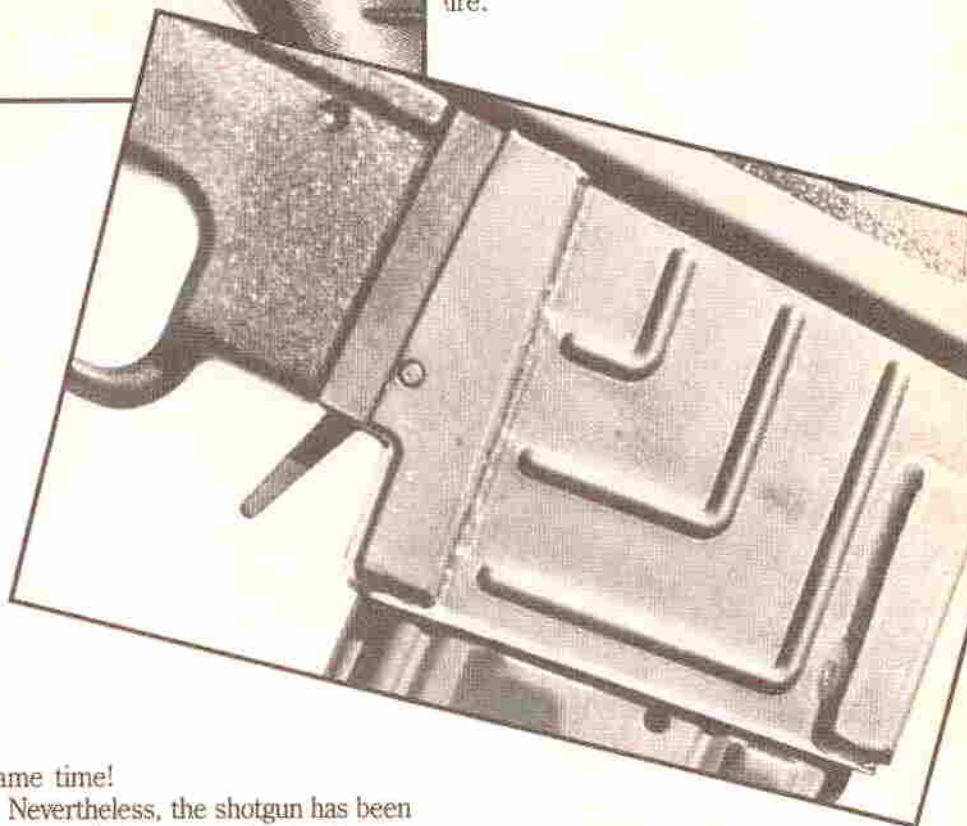
by Denny Hansen



Opposite page, top: Terry Cook firing the SPAS-15. Note proper shotgun technique as opposed to rifle technique. Elbows are held out at approximately 45 degrees from weapon, which aids in control.

This page, above: A view of the left side of the receiver shows both the manual safety and the grip safety. Location is excellent, and this would be ideal if the manual selector could be made ambidextrous.

Right: Magazine release is well-located and easy to manipulate. Serrations on the back of the mag release prevent fingers from slipping.



In many people's opinion, the single most versatile combat weapon is the shotgun. Whether this is founded on sound principles or on the many myths that surround the combat shotgun depends on, like many other subjects, the operator's degree of skill and knowledge. At close range, though, it is very hard to argue that buckshot has few rivals in the stopping-power department.

Consider for a moment three of the most commonly encountered buckshot loads: 4 Buck (.24 caliber), 1 Buck (.30 caliber) and 000 Buck (.36 caliber). At the muzzle, all of these loads will exceed Mach 1 (1,086 feet per second). Taking them in order, as listed above, one round of buckshot is comparable to being hit with 27 .22 LR slugs, 16 .30 carbine slugs or eight rounds from a .38 Special, all at the

same time!

Nevertheless, the shotgun has been hampered by several drawbacks, which include the weight and bulk of the ammunition, limited ammunition capacity and inability to reload quickly. Little can be done about the weight of the ammunition, but the capacity problem could at least be eased if a means to quickly reload the weapon existed.

Luigi Franchi of Italy is famous for its line of shotguns, both sporting and combat. Most notable to readers of S.W.A.T., they have gained acclaim as the manufacturers of the SPAS-12, the LAW-12 and the SAS-12. Their newest entry in the field of combat scatterguns is the SPAS-15, which, like the

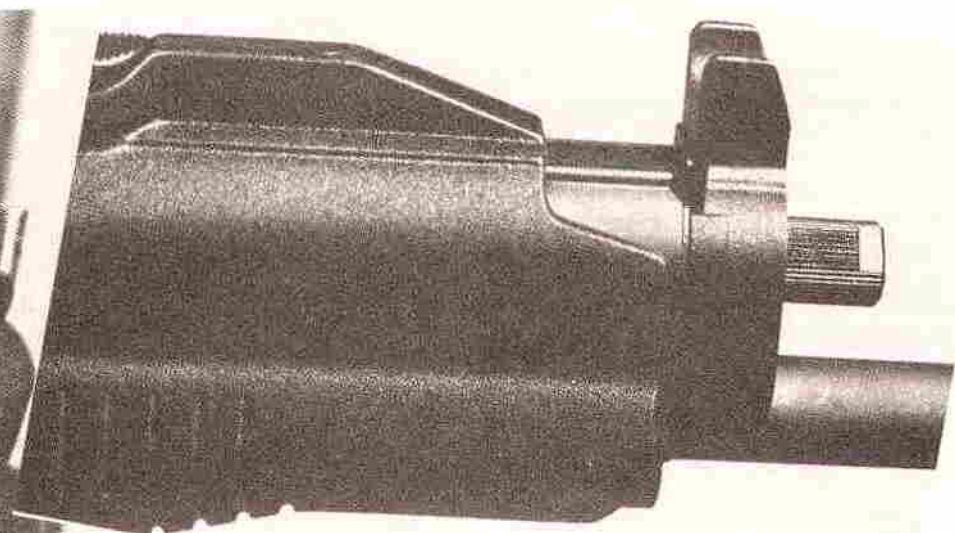
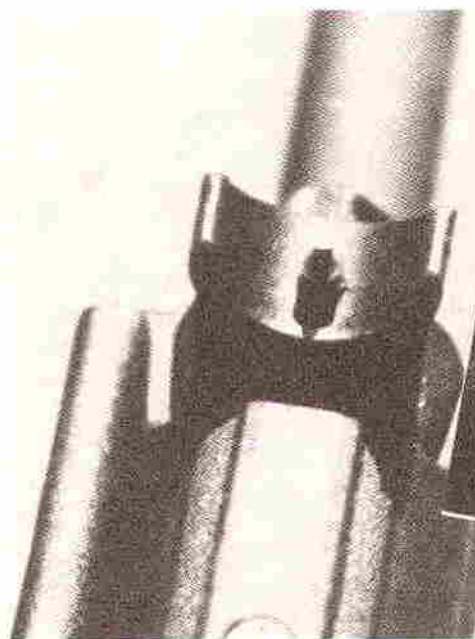
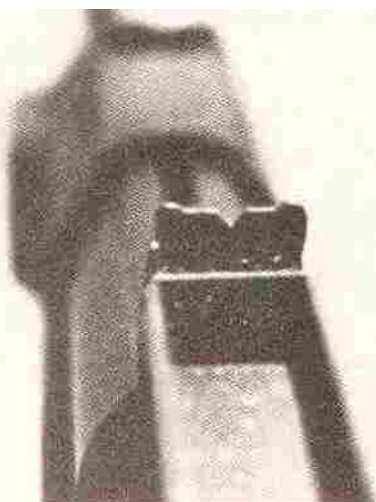
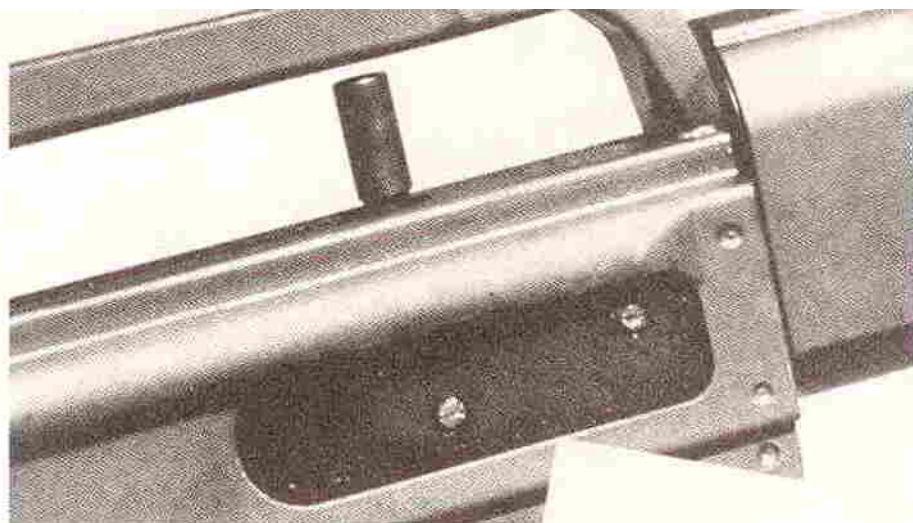
SPAS-12, can be converted to a dual operation shotgun, capable of either slide action (pump) or semiautomatic (gas-operated) fire by pressing a single button. The button is located on the top middle of the forearm and is easy for the operator to reach with his weak hand thumb.

Pressing the button and moving the forearm to the rear will enable the weapon to be fired in the manual, or pump, mode. Moving the forearm to the front when the button is depressed will enable semiautomatic fire.

A cocking handle is located on the top of the receiver to cock the weapon while in the semiauto mode, but the test crew found it much easier to simply load the first round in the pump mode, switching to semiauto after the round was chambered.

When cocked, the action cannot be worked, either in pump or semiauto, with the safety in the "fire" position as the safety also acts as a bolt release. If the gun is cocked, the safety must first be put in the "safe" position to work the action.

The SPAS-15 has two separate safeties: a selector switch and a grip safe-



ty. The grip safety is located on the front of the pistol grip and is actuated by the natural gripping motion as the weapon is brought into play. The selector is located on the left side of the receiver in front of the trigger guard. When the manual safety is engaged, it protrudes into the trigger guard and can be moved to the fire position by extending the trigger finger to push it off, a la M-1 Garand. Due to the location of the safety, it requires the use of the weak hand to put it back in the safe position.

The magazine release is of the tab type and located in back of the magazine well. This placement is excellent, and one-handed manipulation is pos-

sible, although it's easier to exchange magazines with the weak hand.

FIELD STRIPPING

In the tradition of fine military-type firearms, the SPAS-15 is easy to field strip and maintain. Put the safety in the "on" position, and remove the magazine. Next, remove the magazine, and move the selector to the semiautomatic position. Now the pin that retains the grip/trigger group can be pushed out to the right and the entire group removed by pulling forward and down.

Now remove the upper push pin, and pull the stock assembly to the rear, bringing the bolt group with it until the cocking handle lines up with

the holes in the upper receiver and carrying handle. Then remove the cocking handle from the top. Now the bolt group and stock can be withdrawn from the back of the receiver.

Move the front grip forward to the pump position, and unscrew the blind nipple. Then remove the front sight support, and pull the foregrip back as far as it will go. This will expose the selection sleeve. Rotate the selection sleeve clockwise, and pull it free from its cylinder. Move the foregrip to the auto position, and keeping the selector button pressed, remove the foregrip from the muzzle end. At this point the handguard can be pulled forward and away from the gun exposing the

piston guide, piston stand and barrel for maintenance. Reassemble the weapon in reverse order. Further disassembly should be attempted only by trained personnel.

RANGE EVALUATION

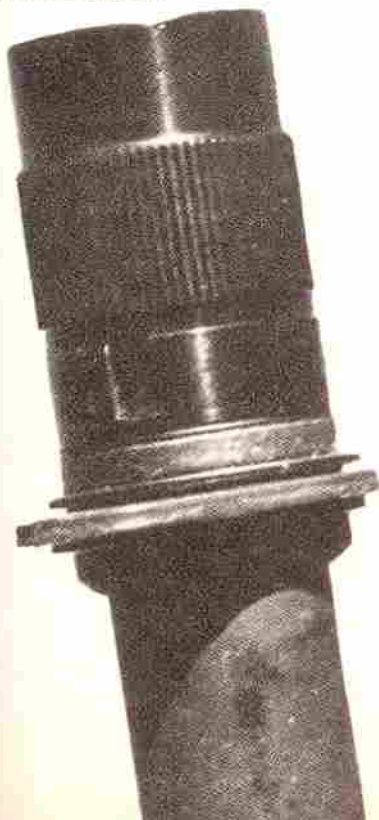
The initial breaking-in period started with 50 rounds of Federal 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ inch buckshot. During this time the SPAS-15 was patterned with various sizes of buckshot at a distance of 60 feet (20 yards). Every gun is different, and it's always a good idea to see what type of ammunition your gun "likes." Our test weapon preferred No. 1 buck, and our best pattern kept all 16 pellets within a 13-inch area. Twelve of those were within the kill zone on our Yavapai Firearms Academy Multipurpose Combat Target.

Opposite page, clockwise from top: The cocking actuator inside the carrying handle is reminiscent of the AR-10 and is used to cock the SPAS-15 while in the semiautomatic mode.

Author did not care for the rear sight because it hinders a proper stock/cheek weld, is unprotected and hard to acquire under speed and in dim light.

The forearm/mode selector is set in the pump mode here. The button that must be pushed to switch to semiautomatic is visible at the top rear of the photo. The front sight is protected by "ears" and is adjustable for elevation.

Below: A variety of chokes are available for the SPAS-15.



Although we had none on hand during the time of the evaluation, Federal offers what they refer to as Premium Buckshot. Offered in both 10- and 12-gauge, Premium Buckshot features extra-hard, copper-plated buckshot in a granulated buffer. Federal advises that all nine pellets from a 00 buck round can be kept inside a 15-inch circle, from a full choked gun at a distance of 40 yards. Putting the entire payload into an area the size of a catcher's mitt at 120 feet is more than just impressive; it's extraordinary.

Switching to BRI Sabot Bullets (slugs), the SPAS-15 delivered acceptable accuracy holding a five-round group inside the kill zone of the Y.F.A. target at 50 yards.

Up to now all of our shooting had been done with high-performance combat rounds. The SPAS-15 functioned without a flaw in both pump and semiautomatic modes. Most individuals and police departments will not train strictly with buckshot and slugs, however. This is partly due to budget restraints. Also, a day at the range shooting a steady diet of buckshot and slugs begins to punish most

shooters—not only those of small stature—and encourages involuntary flinch. Taking this into consideration, we decided to see how the SPAS-15 would perform with various birdshot and reloads.

As expected, there were no problems whatsoever with the gun in the pump mode. It is usually with the semiautos that problems begin to appear with light loads. Not so with the SPAS-15. It functioned almost perfectly through a grueling 300-round evaluation. I say almost perfectly because we did experience five failures to fully eject, much the same as a "stove-pipe" in an auto pistol. As is the case with a pistol, this stoppage can usually be traced to the ammunition.

In our case, the culprits that resulted in the malfunctions were light, one-ounce handloads with No. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ shot that did not develop enough pressure to fully cycle the semiautomatic action. This was not the fault of the gun, and it is a rare event that loads this light are encountered. Even at that, this is only a 1.7% failure rate with training ammunition, which is perfectly acceptable and even desirable as it forces the

(continued on page 84)

SPECIFICATIONS: SPAS-15

MANUFACTURER:	Luigi Franchi S.P.A., Italy
IMPORTER:	F.I.E., Opa Locka, Fla.
TYPE:	Shotgun
MODEL:	SPAS-15
ACTION TYPE:	Pump or semiautomatic, selectable
CALIBER:	12-gauge (12X70mm)
TYPE OF FEED:	6-round detachable box magazine
CAPACITY:	7 (6+1 in chamber)
FLASH SUPPRESSOR:	No
BARREL LENGTH:	21-12 inches with threaded muzzle protection cap
WEIGHT:	
Empty:	9.2 pounds
Loaded:	10 pounds
STOCK:	Fixed, one-piece nylon w/pistol grip
OVERALL LENGTH:	
Stock extended:	31 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches
w/ stock folded:	N/A
GRIPS:	N/A
SIGHTS:	
Front:	Adjustable V
Rear:	Notch, adjustable for windage via dovetail

(continued from page 53)

student to clear an unexpected malfunction. Remember: In real life, s—t happens.

ACCESSORIES

F.I.E. offers several accessories for the SPAS-15, including a sling, wrench/take down tool, extra magazines, a folding stock, several different detachable chokes and a three-round magazine. For law en-

forcement agencies, a rubber ball launcher and a different grenade launchers and a rubber ball launcher.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, we found the SPAS-15 to be a well-made, reliable weapon that should stand up to the rigors of a combat shotgun. With the magazine plugged, this could also be an excellent choice for a sporting shotgun that would withstand the harsh elements of Mother Nature. However, I do have a few things in mind I would like to

Although superbly located for a left-handed shooter, the manual safety requires the use of the weak hand for the majority of shooters who are not southpaws. It would seem a simple matter to make this an ambidextrous device, and so designed, it would be ideal.

The magazine well should be slightly thicker at the bottom and beveled for easy insertion of magazines. The sheet metal at the bottom of the well is thin enough that when reloading one sometimes catches the front edge of the magazine lip. Murphy's Law dictates that this situation could be very hazardous, if not fatal, under stress.

Finally, I don't care for the rear sight for several reasons. First, as the weapon is shouldered, all members of the test crew were naturally looking down the "tunnel" in the carrying handle, only to find their line of sight obscured by the block the rear sight fits on. This forces the shooter to raise his head from a natural spot weld between the stock and cheek to an unnatural position where the stock is held just under the cheek. Second, the rear sight is sitting up there totally unprotected and could be subject to getting knocked out of alignment at best and damaged or broken off at worst. Third, the notch-type sight is fine for bright daylight at the range, but is almost impossible to pick up in low light and is hard to acquire under speed.

All the problems with the rear sight could be alleviated by simply putting an aperture or ghost ring down in the carrying handle toward the rear. The gun would shoulder naturally, the rear sight would be protected by the tunnel in the handle, and the aperture would be fast to pick up even in low light.

With these slight modifications made, the new SPAS-15 should be a welcome addition to your armory.

F.I.E.

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