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Despite the allure of short-barreled M4s, HK’s MP5 is still the best choice for close-quarters fighting.

IN the mid-1990s, law enforcement agencies and SWAT teams began to change from the HK MP5 submachinegun (SMG) to the M4 style of 5.56mm carbine. There were a couple of reasons for this change. First and foremost was the desire of SWAT guys to copy the armament of the U.S. military Spec Ops units. In the late 1980s most military Spec Ops units had found that while the MP5 was the arm of choice for room combat or house clearing, if faced with combat outdoors where the range was beyond 25 meters, the 9x19mm round soon lost steam and at 100 meters or more, it was sadly lacking.

If faced with a bad guy across an airstrip or a city block away, the MP5 was a poor choice. The Spec Ops units realized that the added range and lethality of a 5.56mm caliber weapon was a decided advantage. While the 5.56mm carbine is not as handy as an SMG indoors, it certainly is far superior outdoors when ranges are greater than typical CQB distances. Make no mistake, the 5.56 will provide a better lethality than the 9x19mm, assuming shot placement is equal.

A second reason that was commonly cited to validate the switch to an M4 carbine for CQB was the issue of limited penetration on common indoor wall material. This concept is widely proclaimed to give the .223 round an edge over the 9mm Luger round. The FBI conducted tests to verify this in the late 1980s. The key issue here is what ammo is being used. With M193 ball or M882 (Green Tip), both penetrate excessively indoors. In fact, the difference between 9mm ball and these rounds is not as much difference as many would like you to believe. Both will easily penetrate walls and endanger people in adjoining rooms.

If the 5.56 round is of a frangible nature, like the excellent Hornady TAP 55 gr. or 60 gr. bullet, then the claim of limited penetration has substance. In most of the world, the standard SWAT primary weapon is the HK MP5. In Europe the MP5 is typically loaded with the 9mm Action round of either Type I or II.
U.S. favorite loads for police MP5s are the Federal 115 gr. JHP, Winchester 115 gr. Silvertip and Remington 115 gr. JHP. Launched from a 10” barrel, the ballistics are more than effective enough for getting the job done indoors.

Despite the ballistic evidence and the likely tactical application for the weapon, law enforcement was bound and determined to use the same gun as Spec Ops, and so the switch began in earnest.

Super Bowl Carbine

The switch from the MP5 to the M4 is now nearly complete in the American police community. I’m not sure that this is entirely well researched. In fact, I would argue it has more to do with the “Super Bowl factor.” There is a phenomenon in football in which whatever style of uniform the winning Super Bowl team wears, every college and high school football team will soon want the same type of helmet, shoes, and other gear.

The fact that the high-speed, low-drag Spec Ops guys dropped the MP5 and switched to the M4 has resulted in the virtual blackballing of the MP5. The rejection of the long-proven German subgun was accomplished without any real understanding of why the military made the change— the need to fight outdoors at longer ranges in urban battlefields where they do not control the surroundings.

In American law enforcement scenarios, the police almost always control the outside perimeter, and are primarily dealing with house fighting and CQB room combat problems, which is where the MP5 really shines. The two primary advantages of the M4— that it has better lethality and increased range than the MP5—are largely moot.

By Ken Hackathorn

Spare magazines for the MP5 are available in both the standard 30 round version and a special 15 round short version. Original MP5 30 round magazines were straight and fed 9x19mm ball ammo perfectly. When truncated nose and jacketed hollow point rounds were loaded in these early straight MP5 magazines, failures to feed were the norm.

Heckler & Koch quickly developed a curved MP5 magazine that produced reliable feeding with all types of 9mm ammunition types. The curved magazine has been the standard for nearly the last 20 years.

Currently there are a number of surplus German police and military straight MP5 magazines for sale at very reasonable prices. For practice or training where only round-nose ball ammo is being used, these straight mags work just fine. But, for any service type JHP or non-roundnose bullet, stick with the curved MP5 magazines.

It is critical that when you load your MP5 magazines you always insure that the top round is always on the left as you look at the magazine from the rear. It’s possible to load 31 rounds in the 30 round magazine, but don’t. If loaded with 31 rounds, the magazine will not seat in the weapon if the bolt or moving parts are forward in battery.

If the moving parts are locked to the rear and you insert a magazine of 31 rounds, you will likely induce a stoppage when you try to chamber a round. When you load the MP5 magazine, simply make sure the top round is on the left when looking at the magazine from the rear.

Many operators down-load the MP5 magazine to 28 rounds to insure that seating in the MP5 for a tactical magazine change is easier. A number of MP5 users will utilize the H&K double magazine clamp and mount magazines side by side so a spare magazine is always handy for a reload. It is my experience that you will either love this approach or hate it.

I don’t particularly care for MP5 double magazine clamps with dual magazines hanging on my MP5. If I run out of ammo with the MP5, I find that a weapon transition is faster that trying to switch magazines on the MP5. At typical CQB distances, a transition to my pistol is generally faster and accuracy with a handgun more that handles the 25 meter or less shooting problem.

HK MP5 magazines are some of the best manufactured and rugged magazines ever made. Nonetheless, a wise man will inspect them for damage and keep them clean and well maintained.
in most SWAT callouts.

The downside to the M4 package indoors is that it is less easy to maneuver and is beastly loud, causing hearing loss problem for operators. However, the most important drawback to the M4 is the often overlooked fact that if one of the team members is armed with a .223, there is at least one weapon present that can penetrate most police body armor. Accidents happen, and the level of injuries related to friendly fire in police shoot-outs is often a hidden statistic.

Looking again at the size comparison between an M4 and an MP5 (above left), these two operators are using a fixed stock MP5 and a 10.5” barreled LMT. The edge still goes to the German subgun for size. The MP5 remains a favorite of SWAT teams (above) because most SWAT operators were only soft body armor which stops 9mm but not .223.

Ease Of Training

Heckler & Koch’s iconic MP5 is one of the easiest weapons I have ever worked with and one that can be mastered with minimal training time. Simply put, the MP5 is the easiest weapon I know of to learn to shoot well.

With proper police service ammo, meaning a 9mm JHP round, the MP5’s effectiveness is more than adequate. Equip an MP5 with a good assault style sling, SureFire WeaponLight forearm and a non-magnifying red dot sight like an Aimpoint or Eotech and you have a superb CQB weapon that is very effective at ranges of 25 meters or less.

The MP5 is as reliable as the mailman, accurate and easy to master. Whether fired from semi- or full-auto in short bursts, the ease of putting rounds on target has almost no equal with any other firearm.

If you fire a bad shot from either a MP5 or M4, the results will be less than desired. Whether on the training range or in the real world, only good hits count.

A great deal of effort has been put into

By Ken Hackathorn

The MP5 is a simple arm to keep running. Maintenance is easy. Keep the gun clean and well lubed. I have used various lubes, but have chosen Ballistol as my favorite. It works extremely well as a cleaner, especially in the heavy carbon environment of the HK operating system. The fluted chamber allows quite a bit of carbon to be deposited into the receiver. Ballistol dissolves the carbon with ease, and a light coat on operating parts makes for good lubrication.

Replace the extractor spring every 15,000 rounds, inspect the roller retainer plates, and inspect magazines for damaged feed lips. The exterior surface of the MP5 has an epoxy polymer finish that is extremely resistant to corrosion and wear. The rear sight does require the use of a separate HK sight adjusting tool. Once zeroed, the sights are rugged beyond belief, and I recommend always using the largest aperture as you always want to see as much of your zone as possible in your aiming presentation.
Solving the problems of using the M4 indoors with the effects of muzzle blast and concussion. Suppressors like the excellent SureFire Fast-Attach models are a tremendous advantage when touching off a 5.56 beside your teammate’s head in a hallway, but besides adding weight and length, they are not cheap.

Also, as a result of the use of M4 carbines, hearing protection has become mandatory and state-of-the-art designs now abound. However, simple earplugs work pretty well when using the MP5 indoors.

**Best Subgun Ever Made**

The MP5 is arguably the best designed and most effective submachine-gun ever produced. The gun has been chambered in 9x19mm, .40 S&W, and 10mm. I have used each caliber. The FBI issued the MP5 in 10mm for a decade or so. It was, in my opinion, the finest and most effective SMG ever made. It simply kicked ass like no other SMG ever dreamed of. Sadly, the 10mm MP5 has passed and HK will make no more.

Oberndorf continues to manufacture the 9x19mm MP5 in its variations, despite their desire to replace it with a more modern design. The marketplace still demands the MP5 as the best CQB indoor weapon.

Whether in the fixed stock MP5A3 or sliding stock A3 model, these guns are the standard by which SMGs are currently judged. I have trained a great many people to use the MP5 during which I fired over 100,000 rounds of ammo through both the 9x19mm and 10mm versions.

The ease at which operators can deliver precise shots even while moving at CQB distances is nearly impossible to do with the same degree of accuracy with any other weapon. Fed from 30 round magazines, available in many fire control modes, and manufactured in a suppressed model (MP5SD) the MP5 has been the SMG of choice for over 30 years.

My favorite version is the MP5A3, with two-round burst trigger mode, SureFire WeaponLight forearm, Boonie Packer sling, and with the newest Aimpoint Micro T1 on a co-witness mount.

Heckler & Koch is trying to replace the MP5 with a new SMG called the UMP (Universal Machine Pistol). This modernistic subgun is mostly of polymer construction. Well, to be candid, the UMP has not begun to take the place of the MP5 and has not exactly been a sales success story for Oberndorf.

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**Smile and wait for flash. The business end of an MP5-SD with a SureFire WeaponLight.**

**Below: The best CQB sling set-up is that of the MP5 with HK’s original 3-point sling.**

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**The manual of arms is simple, easy to learn, and for room or indoor combat, the MP5 remains the top choice. If you expect to fight indoors, be realistic on what your weapon choices should be.**

**Nothing hangs as well as an MP5 from a tactical sling. The best “ready gun” position is ideally with muzzle down and the buttstock on the outside of your forearm so your thumb is directly on the safety selector.**

**The selector is pressed to the “go” mode as the gun is mounted, just like a 1911. Waiting to disengage the safety once the MP5 is shouldered will result in a difficult and slow hand maneuver.**

**On the subject of the sliding A3 stock, any time the gun is loaded, the stock should be extended and locked in place. Using the MP5 with the stock collapsed works great if you are a movie actor firing blanks, but in the real world, extend the stock and mount the gun to your shoulder when you need to use it.**

**Remember, the SMG is not a bullet hose. Every bullet you launch in a police encounter with the bad guys has an attorney attached to it. Hit your target well with every round fired. Spray and pray is only for the movies.**

**I teach that the MP5 is to be used primarily on semi-auto, firing a fast triple tap. If under stress the selector goes to the overdrive position, then your firing technique should provide full-auto fire control to keep all shots on target.**

**With a 9x19mm cartridge, the HK MP5 is one of the easiest guns in the world to control and place precise shots on target. Practice until you are confident of your ability with the MP5. Once mastered, it is one of the simplest firearms in history with which to remain competent.**