

GUN POWER

STI'S AR & 1911 POLICE & MILITARY FIREPOWER TACTICAL DUO!

TACTICAL 5.56MM RIFLE
SENTINEL PREMIER .45

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GUN TESTS

Sentinel Premier .45 ACP ■ Ares Defense RCU .22 LR
Nighthawk Tactical .308 Rifle ■ Stag Arms Model 8 5.56MM
STI Tactical Rifle 5.56MM ■ Mossberg Night Train II .308
ATI HP9 9MM ■ Novak Custom 870 Tactical 12 GA ■ More!





STI'S By Matt Berger NEW MILITARY & POLICE FIREPOWER

A high performance tactical duo —
the SENTINEL PREMIER .45 ACP
and TACTICAL 5.56mm RIFLE!

STI's ROOTS lie with competition shooting. The free market dictates that shooters will seek manufacturers of high performance firearms, and the competition world has proven to be an environment in which the Texas company has flourished. While gaming may have been the genesis behind the company's pistols, the experience and design knowledge gleaned from such a background primed the firm for making the jump to production of high-quality defensive and tactical pistols. Particularly in the case of the high-capacity guns, STI's tactical pistols gained significant benefit from the engineering that went into the race guns.

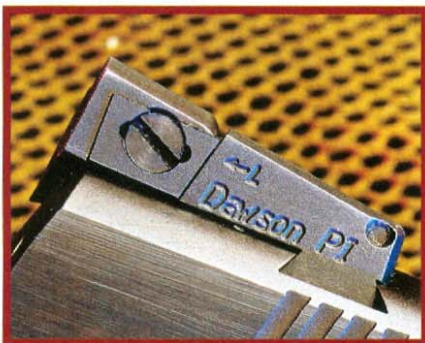


Tactical Rifle and Sentinel Premier pistol from STI are both performance-bred, high-end arms that would serve well in any professional or defensive role.

STI's NEW M&P FIREPOWER



Front sight is a ramped blade from STI housing a tritium dot. Note serrations on the flat-top slide.



Rear sight is a low-mount contoured Dawson Precision/STI "Perfect Impact" unit with tritium dots, adjustable for windage and elevation.

SPECIFICATIONS

STI SENTINEL PREMIER

Caliber: .45 ACP • **Barrel:** 5.0 inches • **OA Length:** 8.5 inches
Weight: 36.7 ounces (empty) • **Grips:** Checkered black Micarta panels
Sights: STI ramped tritium front, Dawson Precision/STI "Perfect Impact" tritium Rear
Finish: Blued or stainless • **Capacity:** 8-shot mag • **Price:** \$1943.50



STI TACTIAL RIFLE



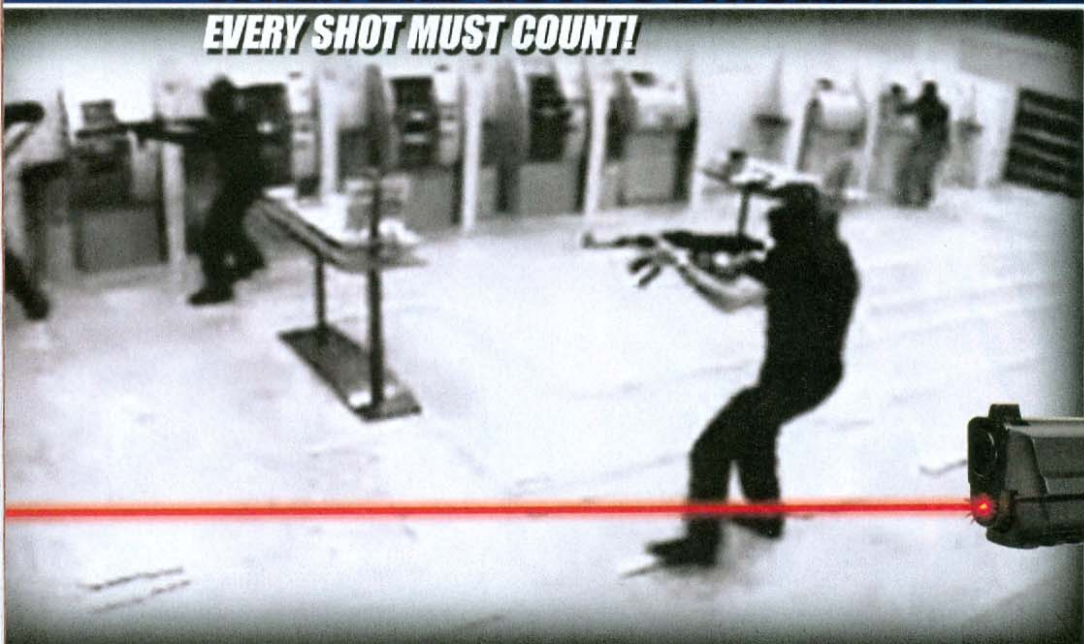
Caliber: 5.56mm/.223 • **Barrel:** 16 inches
Weight: 6.5 pounds (empty) • **OA Length:** 36 inches
Stock: Fixed AR15-style • **Sights:** None • **Action:** Gas operated semi-auto
Finish: Black Teflon Coating over hard anodize • **Capacity:** 30-shot mag • **Price:** \$1800.00

The AR15 pattern rifles are the dominant choice among military and law enforcement, as well as civilian enthusiasts or for gun games such as three-gun competitions. It only makes sense that STI

would begin manufacturing its own version of these rifles, and that time has come with the STI Sporting Rifle and Tactical model.

As one who carries an STI pistol daily both on patrol and off-duty, I've come to

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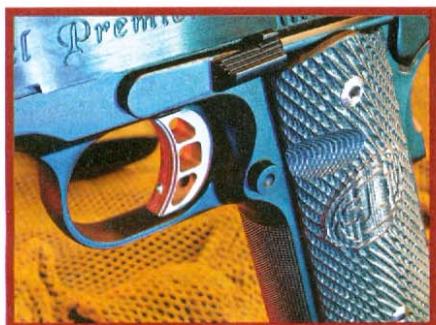


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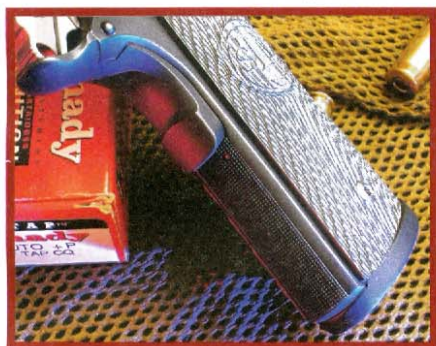
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Trigger is a skeletonized aluminum unit with a serrated face and is adjustable for overtravel.



Mainspring housing is checked 30-lpi. Knuckle Relief High Rise Grip Safety is nicely fitted and disengaged reliably.

have a great appreciation and trust for their products. Hence, when I learned that they'd be producing their own AR15 style rifles, my interest was piqued. Thanks to STI's Director of Marketing and Sales, Rabbit Boyett, both a Tactical Sporting Rifle and the Sentinel Premier 1911 showed up at my FFL holder's establishment.

SENTINEL PREMIER DETAILS

Weighing in at 36.7 ounces, the Sentinel Premier arrived in a padded polymer hard case with a single magazine. At first glance, the pistol was conservative in appearance, its blue steel finish offset by the bare metal of the hammer, barrel, trigger and barrel bushing. Its frame and slide are machined from 4140 carbon steel forgings, mated with a barrel made from a 416R rifle-grade stainless steel billet forging. A 45-degree crown is cut into the barrel and rifling is button broached with a 1-in-16-inch twist and 6 lands and grooves. Barrels are vacuum heat-treated and vacuum tempered to 40 Rc, then machined to exact specifications. We couldn't budge the slide and frame, nor could we manage any movement of the barrel with the gun in battery.

The slide itself has deeply cut cocking serrations fore and aft, and a flattop with nicely done serrations. Ejection port is oversized and flared. The finish is blued with the flats being brushed almost to a

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PERFORMANCE

STI SENTINEL PREMIER .45 ACP

Load	Accuracy
CorBon +P 185 DPX	1.31
Federal American Eagle 230 FMJ	1.00
Federal 230 Hydra-Shok	1.25
Hornady +P 230 TAP CQ	1.25
Remington 230 Golden Saber	1.31

Bullet weight measured in grains and accuracy in inches for 5-shot groups from 25 yards.



STI TACTIAL RIFLE 5.56MM

Load	Velocity	Accuracy
Federal Power-Shok 55 FMJ BT	2978	1.63
Federal 62 FMJ	2773	1.00
Federal Tactical TRU 77 Sierra MatchKing BHP	2476	1.38
Remington 62 Core LocktUltra Bonded PSP	2861	1.25
Winchester 55 FMJ	3161	1.94

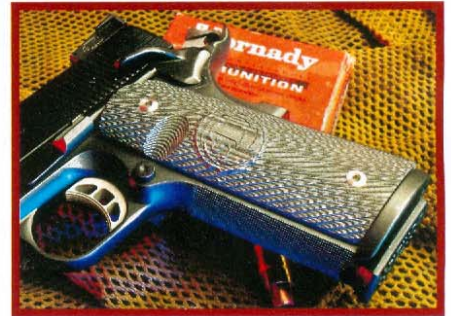
Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second (fps) by PACT Chronograph and accuracy in inches for 3-shot groups from 100 yards.



polish. Front and rear edges are slightly beveled. Right side bears the STI logo forward of the ejection port with the words "Sentinel Premier" on the left. The rear and top are matte blue.

A 416 stainless angle-bore barrel bushing is used in tandem with an STI RecoilMaster recoil spring and guide rod assembly. The RecoilMaster reduces muzzle flip and dip by way of its unique computer-design, inducing longer slide dwell time to allow magazine springs to react.

The elevation and windage-adjustable rear sight is a low-mount contoured Dawson Precision/STI "Perfect Impact" model



Frontstrap is checkered 30 lines per inch and grips are G10 Micarta panels.

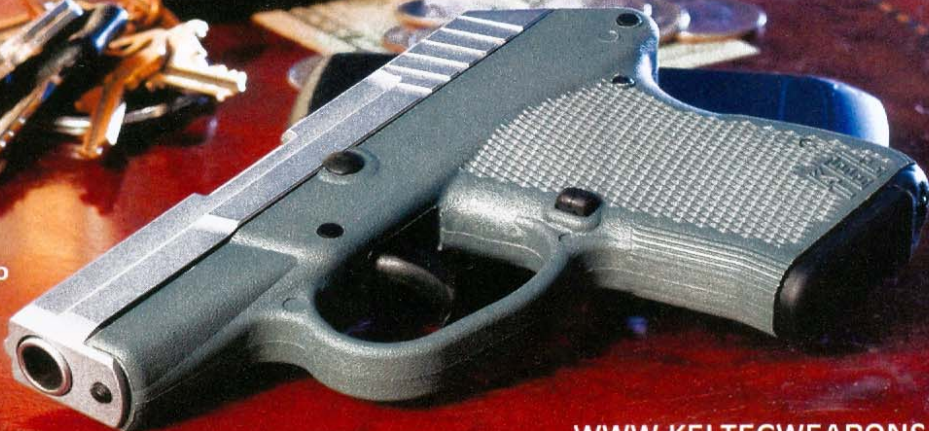


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CALIBER.....32 AUTO
WEIGHT.....6.6 OZ.
CAPACITY....7 + 1
LENGTH.....5.1"
HEIGHT.....3.5"
WIDTH.....0.75"



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carrying tritium dots. The rear face is finely serrated and has a hood of sorts extending forward over the sight base to reduce snagging and sharp edges. The leading edge has enough of a shelf to be used to hook against an object for one-handed racking of the slide. The front sight is a ramped blade from STI, also housing a tritium dot. Both sights are dovetailed into the slide.

The Sentinel's frame is standard width and has a magazine well attached to the mainspring housing via a hex-head screw. The well is blended to the frame and the housing itself is checkered 30-lpi (lines per inch). STI's cast 4140 steel Knuckle Relief High Rise Grip Safety is nicely fitted. We could only manage a hair of horizontal play within the frame. The bottom of the safety has a memory groove. Frontstrap is checkered 30-lpi.

Thumb safety is STI's single-sided unit with a wide serrated paddle. The absence of an ambidextrous safety means less chance of snagging on clothing. The slide stop is standard serrated GI style. A plain, dished button of standard size serves as a magazine release. Hammer is a slotted, spurred Commander style, and the trigger a skeletonized aluminum shoe with a serrated face, adjustable for overtravel. We were able to manage about a millimeter of vertical play of the shoe in its track.

Internal parts are of quality construction and materials. The A-6 hammer and STI S-7 sear are EDM (Electronic Discharge Molding). The extractor is tool steel, the slide stop 4140 carbon steel and the ham-

mer strut is titanium. Only the safeties and ejector are 4140 steel MIM (metal injection molded). All of these parts are hand-fitted, not merely "dropped in" on an assembly line.

The Sentinel is dressed up with G10 Micarta grip panels bearing the STI logo in the middle with wide diagonal grooves cut into them for a textured gripping surface. The left panel is relieved for the magazine release. The fit and finish of the pistol was extremely good overall. While our sample was blue steel, the Sentinel Premier is also available in stainless.

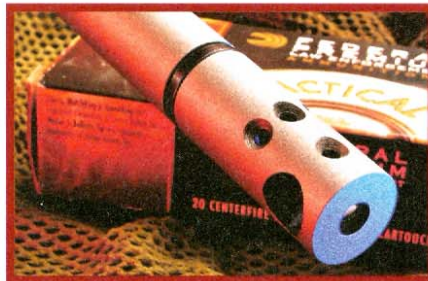
TACTICAL RIFLE DETAILS

The Tactical Rifle came in a padded polymer hard case with one 30-round magazine. When looking at this rifle for the first time, the biggest thing that distinguishes it from others is the Custom STI Valkyrie Hand Guard with its rather distinctive slotted appearance.

The Tactical's upper and lower receivers are forged 7075-T6 aluminum, paired together by captured cross pins. The left side of the magazine well bears the STI logo and company name. Its barrel is a 16-inch 410 stainless steel forging with a 1-in-8-inch twist and is 1/2 x 28 threaded for the Nordic Components Tactical compensator. These barrels are magnetic particle tested, button-broached, and stress-relieved. M4 style ramps guide rounds into the 5.56mm chamber. A 5.56mm chamber, of course, accommodates both the higher chamber pressure of the 5.56mm round



The free-floating handguard is a custom STI Valkyrie unit.



Tactical Rifle utilizes a Nordic Components Tactical compensator.



Note the mil-spec forward assist and brass deflector on STI's Tactical Rifle.



Controls are standard; left side of the mag well is roll-marked with STI's logo.

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FIELD TEST-
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0200ST

Blade // 154CM stainless steel with Tungsten DLC coating, partially serrated 4.0 inches (10.1 cm), .156 inches thick

Scales // 3-D machined, G-10 in matte black

Scales // 5-1/4 inches (13.3 cm)

Lock // Locking liner

Weight // 7.8 oz.



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STI'S NEW M&P FIREPOWER

and the lesser .223. The Tactical uses a trigger group from JP Enterprises.

The free-floating handguard is the aforementioned custom STI Valkyrie unit, drilled top and bottom at 1-inch intervals to accept JP rails. Slots with 0.5 of an inch centers are cut into the side of the handguard so that customers can use T-Nuts to mount additional rails at any angle desired. They also give an interesting aesthetic look and function as vents to cool the barrel. At the front of the handguards there is an exclusive STI Valkyrie Tactical gas block, which bears matching slots for cosmetic reasons, and a Picatinny rail atop.

An AR15-style fixed buttstock with a trapdoor in the butt and storage compartment is used though any aftermarket AR15 buttstock can be attached. The pistol grip is standard Mil-Spec and the rifle is finished in black Teflon coating over hardcoat anodizing for durability and corrosion resistance. The weapon weighs a total of 6.5 pounds.

RIFLE RANGE TIME

When testing the STI Tactical Rifle, we fired 3-round groups at 5-inch VisiColor targets at 100 yards. We mounted an EOTech 512-A65 Holographic Weapon Sight to handle aiming duties. The 512-A65 uses 2 common AA batteries for convenience, as well as the familiar rugged aluminum hood, and toolless knob-mounting bolt. Optics include a 6-MOA circle and a 1-MOA dot. The 512-A65 embodies all of the features needed for speed of acquisition in a CQB setting. Before we moved on to accuracy testing, we had to zero the scope, and for this task, we used a silhouette. Ironically, while firing three round groups to dial in, we achieved the tightest group of the day at 1-inch, two of those rounds key-holing.

Shifting to the 6-inch targets, the next tightest group came from Remington's .223 62-grain Core LockUltra Bonded PSP at



EOTech's 512-A65 Holographic Weapon Sight features a 65-MOA circle with a 1-MOA aiming dot reticle pattern.

1.25 inches, followed by Federal's Tactical TRU 77-grain Sierra MatchKing BHP at 1.38 inches. This was followed by a 1.63-inch pattern from Federal's Power-Shok .223 55-grain FMJBT, and finally a 1.94-inch group from Winchester's 5.56mm 55-grain FMJ.

Within the first few dozen rounds we had a couple of malfunctions. The nose of the rounds wedged against the top of the chamber, stopping the bolt and carrier. But after these two incidents we had no more, so we chalked them up to break-in. Thereafter functioning was smooth, and the ergonomics and controls were standard AR15 fare. The trigger was outstanding with about a millimeter of take-up before substantial resistance was felt, then a clean break at 3.25 pounds and no discernable overtravel.

PISTOL RANGE TIME

Unfortunately, the day we had available to shoot the Sentinel, we were up against 20-mph wind gusts, but we were determined to make the best of it. For our accuracy tests, we fired 5-shot groups at targets with 3-inch bulls-eyes from 25 feet.

Besides retaining the legendary ergonomics of the 1911 platform, STI pistols add their own enhancements to feel and handling for the (Please turn to page 99)

"It only makes sense that STI would begin manufacturing their own version of these rifles, and that time has come with the STI Tactical model."



STI's NEW M&P FIREPOWER

Continued From Page 48

shooter. The STI high-ride beavertail incorporates an extra cut in the tang to allow the gun to sit lower in the hand. The checking on the frontstrap was effective and comfortable. We liked the thumb safety with its wide serrated paddle — it provided a perfect shelf for a thumb hold during shooting. With the memory bump on the grip safety, we had no problems disengaging it, even with the high-thumb hold.

Initially, we had a few malfunctions in which the next round failed to go into battery. Rapping the bottom of the magazine well caused the slide to slam home. If you ask experienced STI shooters, they'll tell you that these pistols are built to very tight tolerances and require a break-in period. After about 200 rounds, the problem disappeared.

The RecoilMaster guide and spring assembly lightened recoil and dampened muzzle flip. The trigger had about 0.06 of an inch of take up before any resistance was felt, followed by a crisp clean



Accurate, reliable and readily accessorized, the STI Tactical Rifle is well suited for a law enforcement role.

break at 3 pounds even. There was no overtravel. The expertly blended magazine smoothed out reloads.

Accuracy was quite good, too. The tightest pattern of the day came from Federal's American Eagle 230-grain FMJ with all five rounds funneling into 1-inch. Second place was tied between Federal's 230-grain Hydra-Shok and Hornady's +P TAP CQ at 1.25 inches. Interestingly, both Cor-Bon's +P 185-grain DPX and Remington's 230-grain Golden Saber also tied at 1.31 inches.

We also tried our hand at rapid fire drills at a downsized silhouette, and found the pis-

tol to handle well. At one point I dumped a couple of a magazines at the chest of the target from 7 yards as fast as I could squeeze the trigger. I then shot a failure to neutralize drill, walking my rounds up the neck of the target to the head, again triggering shots as fast as possible. All in all, there were only three rounds that missed the intended center of chest and head areas.

FINAL NOTES

We felt the Tactical Rifle was capable of better accuracy than we achieved with our EOtech, which is a very fast sight at closer ranges but has a dot that covers an inch on the target at 100 yards. A telescopic sight probably would have brought the grouping tighter still.

STI has crafted a winning pair here. Both weapons are ergonomic, reliable, and accurate with exceptional fit and finish, and would serve well for law enforcement, defensive, or even recreational shooters. In our experience with this and previous tests, the guns of STI have become synonymous with high-end quality for semi-production 1911s — and now AR15 rifles. If you're interested in either a 1911 pistol or an AR15 that is a cut above the competition, STI is a great place to start. ■

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