



Uzi's cyclic rate offers good control in full auto.

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE UZI

BY LEROY THOMPSON

Although the H&K MP5 has become the dominant submachine gun with police tactical units and many military units, for most civilians the most recognizable submachine gun in the world remains the Uzi. In fact, for many non-shooters the term "Uzi" is used almost synonymously with "sub-machine gun."

I find it interesting that I have Jewish friends who basically know nothing about firearms, but can field strip an Uzi. This skill remains from time spent working on a kibbutz in Israel during their youth when they kept an Uzi nearby while performing their daily tasks. One woman told me she used to sling an Uzi while taking children to play from the nursery where she worked, while others carried them while delivering

farm produce or visiting a nearby village to make purchases. A TV director with whom I've worked on *Tales Of The Gun* shot an Uzi out of nostalgia while we were filming and showed me the method he had been taught for shooting it on the kibbutz. Based on the assumption that many of those using the Uzi would have little shooting background, he was instructed to start shooting in front of the target and walk the burst onto it, a technique which was standard in instructing American Jews working on the kibbutz.

I first became familiar with the Uzi when I received my initial foreign weapons training, but I grew to appreciate the Israeli SMG when I used it on VIP protection assignments during the 1970s. Of course, the most famous pro-

tective unit to use the Uzi is the Secret Service, but other teams around the world have also used it. Along with the Beretta M12, it was the SMG in which we put our trust on details in Europe, Asia and Africa.

I have also seen a strong appreciation for the Uzi among special ops units. When I was a grad student at University College, U. of London, a friend of mine was an Israeli English professor who had also been a paratrooper during the Six Day War. He retained contacts with the El Al security force at Heathrow Airport, and I spent a couple of interesting evenings discussing weapons and tactics with them. One was an ex-member of Israel's Flotilla 13—the IDF combat swimmer unit—and was especially fond of the Uzi. In fact, he later demonstrated

for me the quick engagement technique used by Israeli special forces with the Uzi. At first, the stock seems to ride very high on the shoulder, but with practice, it is quite effective. I have found admiration a common sentiment among combat swimmer units who have used the Uzi, as it holds up well to contact with water and functions reliably after a quick shake to clear the barrel.

In considering the Uzi, it is important to remember that it was designed to equip the citizens of a small country surrounded by enemies who are constantly trying to destroy the Jewish state. It has proven an excellent SMG in the hands of Israeli military and police personnel as well as those in myriad other countries, but it has also been carried by Israeli elementary teachers as they took their charges on field trips. In simple terms, the Uzi was designed to be user-friendly—and I find that one of its greatest strengths.

It was also designed to offer a good trade-off between size and performance. For example, with an overall length of 17.3 inches with the stock folded, the Uzi still manages to have a 10.25-inch barrel. This is accomplished by a design in

which the bolt surrounds the barrel. Just as a note on overall length, in preference to the Mini Uzi, the Secret Service shortens the barrels on their standard Uzis which makes them more compact while retaining the lower cyclic rate of the full-sized Uzi.

Other very user-friendly features include the top mounted bolt handle, which is easily operable with either hand, and the pistol grip. By incorporating the magazine well into the pistol grip, faster reloads without looking are possible through the "hand seeking hand" system. The selector switch is also incorporated into the



The author has found the Uzi works well for tasks such as operating roadblocks or checkpoints since the grip safety offers enhanced safety when slung and kept ready in one hand while the other hand is occupied.

pistol grip and with practice can be easily operated with the thumb. The grip safety is an extremely important feature.



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I have found the grip safety very useful when using the Uzi for missions such as vehicle searches or other checkpoint operations. One can sling the Uzi so that the right hand retains control of it while using the left hand to open doors, direct traffic, etc. Should something arouse one's suspicions, the selector may be pushed to fire mode, but the weapon may be instantly rendered safe should the situation prove to be "no shoot" by just releasing the pistol grip. The magazine release is also located on the pistol grip and may be readily worked with the left hand as the empty mag is stripped out while retaining the shooting grip with the right.

Shooting characteristics with the Uzi are good, though the front post and rear peep sights are not as good as those on the MP5 and some others. Still, they offer good results to 50-100 yards. Quick deployment of the standard Uzi collapsible stock takes some practice, but one can get quick at slapping it into position if he uses it a lot. Some military units use the fixed wooden stock which makes the Uzi much easier to fire, but most will want the more compact collapsible model. The cyclic rate on the

standard Uzi runs in the 550-600 RPM range which allows good control of muzzle rise and good trigger control. For some reason, I find that I can shoot the Uzi better while moving towards or away from a target than other SMGs which I have shot quite a lot, including the MP5. I don't know the technical reason, but I find its design allows me better accuracy while on the move.

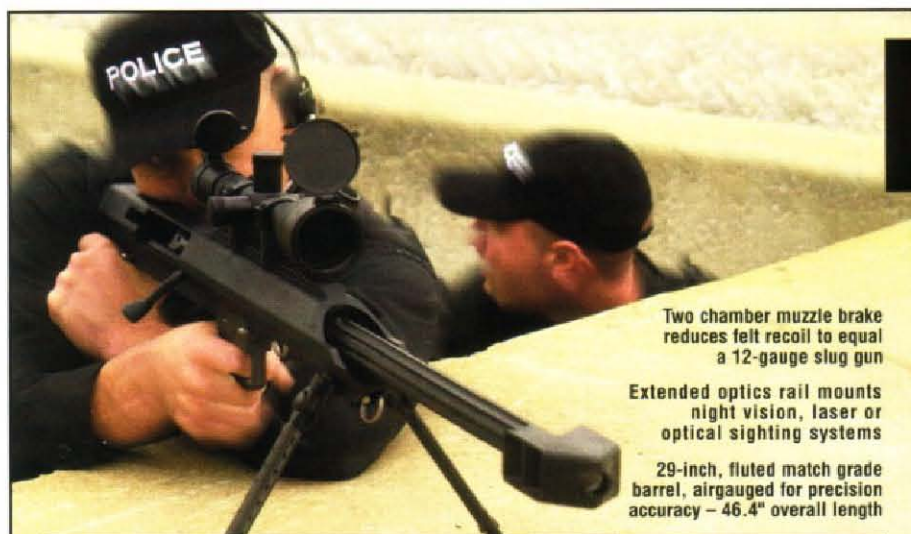
For those wanting a more compact version of the Uzi, the Mini or Micro models are available, the former at about fourteen inches overall with stock retracted and the latter at about eleven inches. These examples are a bit more compact, but their high cyclic rates make them very difficult to control on full auto.

Three magazines are normally available for the Uzi—twenty-, twenty-five-, and thirty-two round. The thirty-two round is most commonly encountered. However, for VIP protection teams, I always preferred the twenty-five round magazine in the gun backed up by thirty-two round magazines. This allowed the Uzi to be carried a bit more readily beneath a coat and brought into action a little more readily since there was less

protrusion beneath the magazine well. Once the twenty-round magazine was introduced, it worked even better.

Originally, only open bolt Uzis were available, but now one can choose between a closed bolt or open bolt design. I guess I have a slight preference for the open bolt design only because I have done most of my Uzi shooting with this type. I would recommend, however, for safety purposes that any unit armed with Uzis, Mini Uzis, and/or Micro Uzis choose only open bolt or closed bolt models to avoid confusion in the safety drill since a closed bolt design is rendered safe when the bolt is back, an open design when the bolt is forward.

The Uzi is an excellent design, in some ways the AK-47 of SMGs since it has proven itself capable of standing up to hard usage and sometimes little maintenance, yet it continues to operate effectively under harsh conditions. The MP5 may be better for precision hostage rescue operations by units who can maintain it and has even proven itself durable in military special ops usage, but for hard usage over an extended period I would still choose the Uzi. ☺



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