

LAUER CUSTOM 5.56mm

CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE

MISSION ESSENTIAL FIREPOWER
WHEN PRECISION AND CLEAN HITS ARE NEEDED!

BY CHARLIE CUTSHAW /// PHOTOS BY CHRIS ROHLING

Many times law enforcement, especially tactical teams, is required to respond to what are known as “critical incidents.” Although all law enforcement work can be stressful, critical incidents are different in that they generally are outside the responding officers’ experience and, possibly, training. Although most tactical teams are specifically trained to deal with critical incidents, training and reality are in many cases just not the same. Any soldier, Marine or police officer that has been in a combat situation will acknowledge that while

AN/PVS-27 combined with Sound Technologies suppressor provides true 24/7 capability.



SWAT Sergeant runs training exercise with CIR from team shooting platform in both daylight and night situations.

Sound Technologies' suppressor interfaces directly with Yankee Hill muzzle brake to provide quick attach/detach capability, sound and flash reduction.



follow-up shot is needed, all that is necessary is to breathe, relax, aim and squeeze the trigger.

Given that a semi-auto can be made to shoot with the accuracy of a bolt action rifle, we believe that a semi-auto is preferable to a bolt action. Another point is magazine capacity. Most semi-automatic rifles have larger magazine capacities than bolt action rifles. Most precision

police precision engagements average about 50 yards and because police precision shooting dictates that every round must be precisely placed and accounted for, a .223 (5.56mm NATO) is perfectly adequate. Also, at typical law enforcement engagement ranges, it is distinctly possible that a .308 round might overpenetrate, resulting in what is known as "collateral damage," in other words, hitting something you shouldn't have. With these considerations in mind, Steve Lauer set out to build a semi-automatic rifle expressly for law enforcement precision shooting, manufactured to the highest standards possible.

Gun Details

Lauer Custom Weaponry is better known for its tough as nails, state-of-

training helps prepare, the reality places far more stress on the individual.

Critical law enforcement incidents are characterized by being sudden and unexpected and may disrupt basic assumptions about our society, the people in it and may also involve loss of life. Typical critical incidents include, but are not limited to, hostage situations, snipers and active shooters. In any of these, the final solution might be the employment of a police precision tactical marksman to eliminate the threat before he can take the life of an innocent victim. For these situations, a rifle capable of match grade accuracy is required with the accepted norm being under 1-MOA, the extreme distance at which most law enforcement engagements will occur. In fact, FBI data show that the average law enforcement precision tactical engagements are at 51 yards. Most rifles capable of the accuracy necessary are bolt action rifles, but there are a very few semi-automatic rifles that can achieve bolt action accuracy. Part of the reason for this is that it is far more difficult to manufacture a semi-automatic rifle that will achieve bolt action accuracy levels, although it can be done, as is evidenced by our test Lauer Critical Incident Response Rifle (CIR).

There are advantages to having a semiautomatic precision rifle. First and foremost, follow-up shots are much quicker and easier than with a bolt action rifle because the shooter doesn't have to disturb their sight picture by manually manipulating a bolt. Not only is this disruptive to the shooter, but it also might sufficiently distract the shooter to the point where the second shot might not be taken. In some critical incidents, there may be more than one threat, requiring rapid engagement of multiple threats. Felt recoil in a semi-automatic rifle is somewhat reduced because the mechanism absorbs some of it as it cycles. The semi-automatic also allows the shooter to maintain their sight picture and instantly observe the results of the shot and if a

tactical engagements require only one or two shots at most, but if it is needed, we like to have more ammunition on tap.

Before we get into the "meat" of our evaluation, we should briefly discuss rifle calibers. Most police precision tactical marksmen use .308 (7.62mm NATO) caliber rifles, and while this caliber is preferable for military precision marksmen due to the fact that they must engage targets as far distant as 1000 yards/meters and penetrate masonry or brick barriers, the .308 is probably overkill for law enforcement precision shooting. As noted,

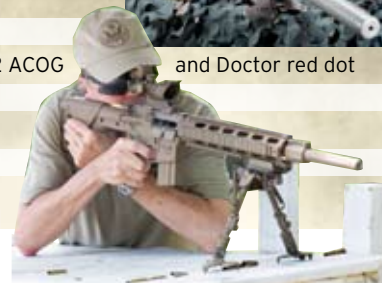


Yankee Hill muzzle brake/flash suppressor is designed for QD with Sound Technologies suppressor.

SPECIFICATIONS

LAUER CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE RIFLE

CALIBER:	5.56mm NATO (.223)
BARREL:	24 inches
OA LENGTH:	38 inches
WEIGHT:	9.8 pounds (empty)
STOCK:	Magpul's PRS stock
SIGHTS:	None, comes with Trijicon 4x32 ACOG and Doctor red dot
OPERATION:	Gas, semiautomatic
FINISH:	DuraCoat Flat Dark Earth
CAPACITY:	30-shot mags
PRICE:	Call for pricing



PERFORMANCE

LAUER CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE RIFLE 5.56MM

LOAD	VELOCITY			ES	SD	ACCURACY
	HIGH	LOW	AVERAGE			
Black Hills 77 HPBT	2903	2873	2883	30	12	0.60
Hornady 75 TAP	2803	2706	2737	97	28	1.00
Winchester 69 HPBT	2761	2708	2733	17	53	0.70

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity, ES (extreme spread), SD (standard deviation) in feet per second (fps) by Oehler 35 chronograph, and accuracy in inches for two 5-shot groups from 100 yards. Temperature: 85 degrees Fahrenheit.

the-art DuraCoat finishes. DuraCoat is available in virtually any color and resists 100 pounds per inch direct impact and 80 pounds per inch reverse impact. Its pencil hardness runs H to 2H. DuraCoat will pass a 300-hour salt spray test, which far exceeds military requirements for a firearms finish. DuraCoat can be applied at the factory or by the individual because it is so simple to use. DuraCoat can be applied over just about any surface, including wood, plastic or metal as long as the surface is clean and free of grease or oil. DuraCoat is a product with which we have extensive experience and can recommend without reservation. But it is not our purpose to extol the virtues of DuraCoat although it is a product we have come to rely on. Steve Lauer started building his own line of custom AR-type rifles and carbines several years ago and his latest product continues the tradition of high quality firearms.

In any custom-built firearm, regardless of intended use, the heart of the firearm is the components used in its construction. In the case of Lauer's Custom Weapons, components come from a number of sources, all of them noted for good quality. Internal parts such as bolts and bolt carriers are from DPMS. The upper and lower receivers are made to Lauer's specifications by Lewis Machine & Tool, a company well known within the firearms industry for quality of manufacture. The CIR stainless bull barrels are from Wilson, air gauged and fluted for stiffness and heat dissipation. The twist rate is 1 turn in 8 inches to stabilize heavier, longer match bullets. Muzzles are threaded 0.5 of an inch diameter with 28 threads per inch to accommodate standard suppressors and muzzle devices. Once the components are received at Lauer's facility, each is checked for proper tolerances and the assembly process begun.

Each CIR is hand built in the best custom rifle tradition. Tolerances are held to absolute minimum. Barrels are squared in the upper receiver and the bolts are trued to the barrel extension. CIR upper and lower receivers are hand-fitted and matched, in keeping with the custom rifle practice of hand-fitting each component. In fact, each major component of every CIR is hand-fitted. Like all Lauer match grade rifles, the CIR is a true precision shooting instrument that is tested prior to leaving the factory and guaranteed to shoot 1/2-MOA with match grade ammunition. Both upper and lower receivers, handguard and barrel of each CIR is hand-fitted and serial numbered.

Each CIR is fitted with a Trijicon 4x32 military specification ACOG (Advanced Combat Optical Gunsight) and a Doctor

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red dot sight for close quarters work and as a backup. Like all else, mounts and scope are trued to the rifle and each rifle is zeroed and checked for accuracy prior to leaving the factory. Other CIR custom components include a DPMS free-floating tube with MIL-STD-1913 rails at top, bottom and sides. The stock is a Magpul that is fully adjustable for length of pull and cheek rest height. The ergonomic pistol grip is Magpul's Mission Adjustable MIAD Grip. The gas block is a JP Enterprises unit with MIL-STD-1913 rail. The CIR is chambered to 5.56mm military dimensions. The CIR and its components are finished in military specification Flat Dark Earth DuraCoat.

The CIR stock is Magpul's Precision Rifle/Sniper (PRS) unit, completely adjustable for length of pull and cheek rest height. Adjustment is via aircraft aluminum wheels with positive click detents so the adjustments hold. All other metal components are made of corrosion-resistant stainless steel. The heel (bottom) of the stock has a MIL-STD-1913 rail for mounting a rear monopod. The CIR's pistol grip is also a Magpul unit, in this case a Mission Adaptable (MIAD) grip with replaceable front and rear (four and three, respectively) straps that should accommodate just about any size hand. All MIAD surfaces are rough textured for positive grip, even with wet hands. The grip has a waterproof compartment with adapters for spare batteries or a spare bolt, although we think that batteries will

fail more frequently than the bolt in semi-automatic applications like that of this rifle.

The CIR forend is an aircraft aluminum free-floating unit from DPMS with MIL-STD-1913 rails at top, bottom and sides to accommodate night vision, bipods and other accessories that have become the norm in military and law enforcement tactical operations. The features of the CIR allowed us to set it up to suit our preferences as would any other potential user. This isn't to say that our set-up is the only one, just an example of the versatility of this outstanding shooting machine!

Our CIR came fitted with a standard Harris HBLM bipod that extends from 9 to 13 inches with Harris' Pod Lock to positively lock the bipod into position. The bipod was finished in MIL-SPEC Flat Dark Earth to match the rest of the rifle, but we added a Phoenix Tactical "Pod Claws" that upgrades the bipod's standard rubber feet to adjustable "claws" that pivot front to back to adapt to just about any environmental conditions, plus preventing the bipod from sinking into the ground when positioned on soft earth.

The Pod Claws replace the bottom section of the bipod legs using an adapter. Replacement takes only a few minutes and is easily accomplished using a 1/8-inch hex wrench that is included in



Generation 3+ AN/PVS-27 is USMC standard NVS and represents the highest light-gathering capability of any I² night vision device.

the kit. Although we installed only the Pod Claws, Phoenix Tactical offers a series of replacement legs that allow the user to install whatever feet are appropriate for the situation; legs include not only the claw feet shown, but also smaller claws, rubber feet, spike feet or "ski" feet. All can be exchanged in just a matter of minutes, giving the shooter unparalleled flexibility without having to replace the entire bipod assembly. Another benefit of the Pod Claw system is that it actually reduces felt recoil somewhat because the recoil forces are directed into the ground by the large claws that help hold the rifle in place.

Optics

As mentioned, our test CIR came with a Trijicon 4x32mm optic. The Trijicon is one of the most popular optics in use by the military and law enforcement tac teams and our test optic is very similar to the US Marine Corps (USMC) standard Trijicon ACOG 4x32mm. This optic utilizes

the Bindon "both eyes open" aiming concept which provides quick target acquisition at CQB distances while enhancing target identification and hit probability out to 800 meters. The reticle is illuminated via a combination of fiber optic and tritium, allowing the aiming point to be constantly illuminated without batteries. The tritium illuminates the aiming point in complete darkness, while the fiber optic regulates reticle brightness in daylight depending on ambient light conditions.

Our test Trijicon also came with a Docter 1.07x 3.5-MOA red dot optic for CQB work. The Docter sight is arguably the most compact red dot sight available and this particular sight is marketed by Trijicon as an accessory to their ACOG optics, is parallax free and is zeroed at the factory at 40 yards. The Docter sight is water resistant, but not waterproof. In



SWAT Sergeant sends rounds during a training session using the CIR. All team members liked the rifle's accuracy, reliability and overall quality.

addition, the Trijicon optic has a built-in backup iron sight.

Current military standard NVS (night vision systems) are the Army's AN/PVS-22 Universal Night Sight (UNS) and Marine Corps' AN/PVS-27 Magnum Universal Night Sight (MUNS), both manufactured by Optical Systems Technology, available from Advanced Night Vision Systems. For our test, we set up the CIR with the USMC's MUNS. Like the UNS, the Generation 3+ MUNS is what is designated a "clip on" NVS that attaches to the MIL-STD-1913 rail via a LaRue Tactical quick disconnect (QD) mount that has no effect on zero and has no parallax issues.

Although larger than the UNS, the MUNS has several performance features that are superior to the smaller unit. The MUNS gathers twice the light of the UNS and can be used against targets 1.5 times the distance of the smaller UNS. To give some appreciation of the capabilities of this NVS that led to its adoption by the Marines, the MUNS can detect a vehicle

in starlight at 3150 meters and a man at 1350 meters. Under a quarter moon, vehicles can be detected at 4070 meters and a man at 1730 meters. We have used the MUNS and other OSTI night vision optics and can personally attest to their performance. Images are a crystal clear green monotone with no sparkles or "blooming" around bright lights due to a feature called "autogating" that regulates the amount of light entering the intensifier tube. All OSTI NVS are also shock mitigated, i.e., hardened to protect the intensifier tube from damage if the unit is dropped or whacked with something, which often happens in tactical situations.

Shooting Impressions

The Lauer CIR has the feel of a match grade AR-type rifle. The heavy free-floated barrel is fluted both forward and aft of the gas block. The DPMS aluminum free float MIL-STD-1913 handguard is vented and, like other major components of the rifle, serial numbered. The JP Enterprises single stage trigger had zero creep and broke like the proverbial "glass rod" at an average of just over 3 pounds, although it felt lighter. Functioning was absolutely reliable; there was not a single stoppage over nearly 100 rounds fired. We evaluated several types of ammunition in the CIR. We tried Black Hills 77-grain match (Mk262, Mod 1), Hornady 75-grain TAP and 69-grain cartridges from Winchester. Ejection was positive with spent casings thrown almost straight out of the ejection port in a pile about 3 feet to the right. Best accuracy was with Black Hills 77-grain, followed by Winchester 69-grain and Hornady 75-grain TAP. The LCW-15 Target delivered sub-MOA accuracy with both Black Hills 77-grain and Winchester 69-grain ammunition without the barrel having broken in.

Final Notes

Lauer Custom has built a superbly accurate and reliable rifle that is ideally suited for law enforcement use as a precision tactical rifle at typical engagement distances. For sporting use, it would also be an excellent varmint rifle. The manual of arms will be familiar to anyone who has ever used an AR whether military or civilian and the CIR is as accurate as many bolt action rifles we have tested over the years. At 9.8 pounds, the CIR is no lightweight, but it is a good 5 pounds lighter than most precision bolt rifles we evaluate.

The bottom line is that the Lauer Critical Incident Response Rifle delivers the goods on every level: fit, finish, function, reliability and accuracy. For the individual or agency seeking a semiautomatic precision rifle in .223 caliber, the CIR is an excellent place to start. **SW**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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