

The Opinion: At the Gun Store – The Springfield Armory 1911 Mil Spec is designed to give you the look and features of the original 1911-A1 with a few functional enhancements. In researching this column I discovered there are at least four variants including the sample I had for review.

The PB9108LP (last P designation for the Package product) that I had for review. A stainless steel version PB9151LP. The PW9108L designated as the WW II Mil Spec, and the stainless steel version PW9151L.

Visually the difference between the PB and PW is the PW does not have the lowered and flared ejection port. There may be other differences but this review focuses on the PB model that was available.

When searching for Mil Spec it is important to understand that the “Mil Spec” has changed over the 100 plus years the 1911 has been in service. If you are searching for details on the various specification you are going to dig deeper in other sources for that kind of information. My reviews do not focus on historical accuracy but rather look at the usefulness for the purposes of self-defense and recreational target shooting.

At 40 ounces it is one of the heaviest handguns you are likely to encounter. When you pick it up though, you should notice the balance afforded by the steel frame. It is front heavy, but not as much as you might initially expect. And as a Vietnam Veteran once told me. “When you are out of ammo, you still have a two pound steel club.” And his comment on the .45 ACP round was “one per customer”.

This Springfield “Mil Spec” has the standard back strap safety without a large upsweeping beavertail to help protect the flesh of the web of your hand. If the fleshy part of the web of your hand protrudes above the protrusion on the grip safety, then you will probably get bitten by the standard hammer.

The enhancements are seen on the lowered and flared ejection port that enhances the extraction of the empty cases. The tapered magazine well aids in reloading. This taper is pretty slight and not the large guide seen on competition 1911s.

The Parkerized finish will stand up to wear better than a blued finish. Cocobolo wood grips are standard with a set of black composite grips included in the Package.

The Package comes with the gun, two 7 round steel magazines, a belt holster and a two magazine carrier that also has belt loops. Belts under 1.6” in width should work well when open carry is allowed. A plastic carry case to hold it all is also included.

This gun also has an Integrated Locking System which is activated through the back strap. It is not an intrusive device.

The thumb safety is only on the left side along with the slide release. The thumb safety can only be engaged when the gun is cocked.

The sights are standard 3 dot with the front being staked and the rear in a dovetail that allows for windage adjustments. The slide has forward tilting grooves only at the back of the slide.

The trigger guard is smooth and rounded, no purchase for those who like an off hand finger in front of the trigger guard. The dust cover is smooth and there is no facility for mounting lights or lasers. However there are after-market replacement grips that have a laser sighting built into them.

The magazines provided are of the flat follower steel variety. After-market 8 or 10 round magazines should also work.

The stainless steel match-grade barrel has a bevel cut breach face to aid in loading rounds into the chamber. Part of the frame is also polished to serve as a ramp for the rounds on their way to the chamber.

This gun has the rounded mainspring housing. This elongates the grip dimension which could be partially offset by thinner after-market grip panels.

The trigger on the model I had to review broke at 4 pounds 10 ounces. The take up is about .06". The break occurs about .03" later. Full travel to the rearmost position is about .135". Reset is about .05" going back out.

The aspect of a 1911 trigger that I like the most is its linear travel. Straight back for the break and then straight forward for the reset. There is no rotational component in the trigger pull or reset. I think this is a huge advantage in the whole trigger control process.

The MSRP as of December 2014 is \$785 for the Parkerized model and \$889 for the stainless models. This puts the Springfield in the middle of 1911 pricing. Based on the fit, finish, and features of the product I would say the value is good.

On the Range: With a seven round capacity you will be reloading twice as much as most full size polymer frame 9mm or .40S&W. Compared to a 9mm though, you are sending twice as much lead down range with each shot.

The recoil sensation from this 1911 is more push than flip. A combination of the .45 ACP round and the steel frame.

I found the accuracy to be superior to polymer framed pistols reviewed. The sight radius of 6.28" falls within the sight radius dimension of many 9mm or .40 S&W full size polymer frame guns. But the 1911 has a 5" barrel. Given the bigger holes being made in your targets, it's possible to imagine a few close to the ring shots getting a bump up in scoring.

The two three shot groups pictured, were the only six shots I fired in that gun at that range session. When the targets came back I thought, why burn more ammo? It is not going to get any better than this. Move on to the next gun. The ammunition used for the test was Remington 185gr Metal Coated flat nose. Not the usual 230gr, but not precision crafted high grade target fodder either.

I used this gun on some 50' bullseye targets and quickly realized I would need a lot more practice time to be a proficient bullseye target shooter. That is not because the gun is lacking, it's just one handed bullseye shooting is more demanding. Practice improves performance.

New shooters who are looking for a home defense gun should not shun the 1911 because of its size, weight and large caliber. It is its mass that make it a stable platform. Grip panels are available in various thicknesses to help with grip adjustment. The geometry and pull weight of the trigger make it controllable. The caliber make it potent. There are also manufacturers of 1911 pattern pistols in .40 S&W, and 9mm Luger.

I have found most shooters can shoot this gun well and it is a good choice for an inside the home personal defense gun. Along with tested hollow-point ammunition, a flashlight and possibly adding a laser sight grip panel, this gun is appropriate for stopping threats.

The usual lineup of target ammunition worked flawlessly. Remington, Winchester, Federal. As with any gun you will be using for self-defense, you will need to try your self-defense ammo in this gun to verify function. I have read that some 1911's have problems with hollow-point ammunition. With the combination of the polished frame and beveled breach I expect this gun will handle hollow-points very well.

If you were only going to purchase one handgun to keep in your safe to use for target shooting and/or inside the home personal defense, this is an excellent choice.

On this 73rd anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, I think it is fitting to review a descendant of the handgun design that became synonymous with

the American Soldier in World War II. In our short cycle marketing consumer driven society, it is amazing that there is still a demand for this design. A lot of activity around this design was present leading up to 100th anniversary. There is now a wide selection of products based on this design from many manufactures, both in the United States and abroad.

- Greg Poole, December 7, 2014, revised July 30, 2015