



Robar used an all-steel Kimber 1911 as the base for a self-defense handgun built to ITTS co-founder Scott Reitz's specifications.

The aforementioned specifications came from Scott Reitz, co-founder and lead instructor of International Tactical Training Seminars (ITTS). Drawing from his 30 years of law enforcement experience and five officer-involved shootings, the criteria for Reitz's baseline pistol were simple: an all-steel 1911 in .45 ACP. He conveyed his list of requirements to Robbie Barrkman, owner of the

A Gunfighter's Take On the 1911

Although I grew up in a kinder, gentler era, where handguns were things of beauty meant for nice recreational outings, I think I'm getting the hang of this gunfighter mindset.

I haven't become more belligerent, but rather more aware of predators with no respect for human life, and aware that regardless of how sophisticated our technology becomes, no cell phone, surveillance system or electronic alarm will save my life or protect my family in a life-threatening situation. Accepting the fact any "fisticuffs" skills I might have enjoyed in a bygone era are now, indeed, things of the past, I spend more time searching for well-defined, efficient fighting handguns that may help me survive whatever comes along. And I just found a dandy.

Robar Companies and longtime builder of custom guns. The resulting piece of hardware is impressive.

The sample provided for this article was built off of a Kimber, but buyers may select a different manufacturer if they choose. Many of the features are what a lot of us request on a fighting handgun. For example, the tuned extractor, polished breechface, throated barrel, polished feed ramp, and lowered and flared ejection port all contribute to 100-percent-reliable functioning of the pistol, and that's exactly what I experienced on the range.

Its Commander-style hammer and beavertail grip safety allow a high grip with no fear of slide cuts during cycling. Many 1911 aficionados would insist the gun does not need Reitz's requested ambidextrous thumb safety, and perhaps it doesn't, but if you have to operate the pistol with the support hand only, you will definitely appreciate it.

The Novak LoMount tritium sights (thoughtfully installed with an index mark) provide enhanced visibility should a deadly encounter occur in low-light conditions, and judging from statistics, that is the preferred environment of two-legged predators. Likewise, the Novak accessory rail (an optional feature) can turn a nighttime encounter entirely in your favor with the simple attachment of a good weaponlight. The titanium firing pin provides an additional safety device preventing a negligent discharge should the pistol be dropped.

At first, I thought the ITTS gun had more accuracy refinements than necessary for a defensive fighting handgun. Things like a match-grade barrel bushing, a tightened slide-to-frame fit and a precision trigger

Shooting Results

Load	Velocity	Average Group Size
Black Hills 230-grain JHP	839	2.0
DoubleTap 230-grain Controlled Expansion	958	1.1
DoubleTap 230-grain FMJ	936	2.0
Winchester 230-grain PDX1 Defender	911	1.3

Velocity measured in fps for 10 consecutive shots 10 feet from the muzzle with a Shooting Chrony chronograph. Temperature: 68 degrees Fahrenheit. Accuracy measured in inches for five consecutive, five-shot groups from a sandbag rest at 50 feet.

job seemed a bit much on a duty pistol, and perhaps even contrary to the pursuit of maximum reliability. But when I read the ITTS handgun training curriculum, I noticed Reitz includes training at much longer ranges than other classes I've attended. Even his basic class includes shooting at 50 yards. In his Handgun III class, students shoot at ranges out to 135 yards. There's a method to this "madness": In any situation where there are incoming rounds, distance is your friend—especially if you can shoot better than your adversary. As an old-time, long-range handgunner, I totally agree with this concept. When I got to the range and the pistol produced five-shot groups right around an inch, it reminded me how much I like having this level of accuracy built into a defensive handgun, especially when it's 100-percent reliable.

However, when I handled and manipulated the Reitz/Robar pistol, I became even more impressed. There are cocking serrations on the front of the slide, which I find very helpful when performing chamber checks. The magazine well is beveled to facilitate reloads, a nice feature, particularly when you're in a hurry and under stress.

Checking on frontstrap and mainspring housing is quite aggressive, ensuring your grip will not slip. This is something you might not appreciate during a long training session when your hands become raw from firing hundreds of rounds, but your life is worth more than the few Band-Aids it will take for you to become proficient.

It was the grips that intrigued me the most on this 1911. The spec sheet from Robar simply lists them as "slim grips," but that doesn't do them justice. Yes, they're quite thin, but this slimness is accentuated by the taper from mainspring housing to frontstrap and the five scalloped cuts running all the way from top to bottom. Additionally, there are horizontal serrations running the width of the panels. Grabbing this 1911, it felt like my palms were flowing into the grips and becoming part of the pistol. Combined with the horizontal serrations on the grips and the checkering on both frontstraps and backstraps, the gun was rock-steady in my hands. A final advantage was, with the thinner grips, my short index finger reached the trigger surface with ease, which gave me greater control when pressing.

The handgun's two-tone finish is handsome, extremely rugged and applied


both externally and internally. Roguard and NP3 coatings are both Robar creations, and have gained an enviable reputation among shooters. Other than the grips and the Novak accessory rail, the gun is completely dehorned before applying the finishes.

That said, I'm a big believer in having a rail on any gun that will see primary use either in home defense or carried in a vehicle. Shooting a handgun with a light on a rail is much easier than using a handheld light, because you can use your normal, two-handed grip.

There were only two things I would consider changing. I'm not a fan of guide rods, particularly on full-size 1911s. That's not a criticism, just a preference. On the Reitz/Robar pistol, the guide rod is an option; you can order yours with or without it. The test gun contained a lanyard loop, and that will be a standard offering. I have nothing against lanyard loops—I understand their purpose, but have no idea what to do with them. I mean, they're fine for 19th century British troops on parade in India and Africa with lanyards attached to their epaulettes, but for a civilian in today's world? A phone call to Reitz revealed why he recommended the loop. During his years of service, there were several cases of

sidearms being dropped and destroyed during SWAT maneuvers. Handguns dropped in remote areas or during a riot can be lost, and few things are as disheartening as finding yourself in a gunfight without a gun.

The Robar spec sheet states the pistol is test fired for function and sight regulation. There were no failures in my testing and the 230-grain loads I shot all printed at point of aim. I would love to fire the handgun at longer distances, but I had to return the gun before I had the chance to visit an appropriate range.

There is no doubting the credentials or capabilities of the two individuals involved in the creation of this pistol. I've seen a number of Barrkman's handguns over the years, and have always been impressed by their quality. In addition to Reitz's 30 years with the LAPD, he's been lead instructor at ITTS for 23 years. I dropped by one of his classes at the company's private training range outside Los Angeles one afternoon, and stayed into the night shooting. It was clear he wasn't there to make new friends or sing songs around a campfire. He was there to ensure we became proficient in defending ourselves with a handgun, and he and Barrkman have built an excellent pistol with which to do just that. 

From the Source

Scott Reitz is a 30-year veteran of the LAPD, including 10 years in the force's vaunted SWAT unit. He also spent 15 years as the primary firearms instructor for the elite Metropolitan Division before retiring in 2006. Reitz founded International Tactical Training Seminars with his wife, Brett McQueen, in 1990. He explained his history with the 1911, and why it led to his modifications to the platform:

"During my first years in SWAT, the two 1911s issued to each team member were put together from various 1911s recovered from the property division of the LAPD. To say that these pistols were not uniform is a gross understatement. If one is betting one's life on a firearm, then it should be a weapon of high performance, durability, functionality, reliability and accurate to a fault.

Brett and I have lost count of the many times we have received requests for our take on what would comprise a proper gunfighting 1911. What I suggested was a 1911 built to my specifications based on many decades working with 1911s. The Reitz Signature 1911 is a hardened, tuned and properly-fitted pistol. It is designed to be a pure gunfighting pistol and nothing less. It fits the hand perfectly and can be worked out to 500 yards or run at speed up close. It is reliable, it works."



PHOTO COURTESY ITTS