

Smith & Wesson SW1911Sc

I don't normally geek out about a handgun. You see, I work at a gunshop and I see every new gun that comes in and I see all the trade-ins too.. So needless to say, I'm jaded about guns. It takes something special to get me to even raise an eyebrow.

A fellow came in with a blue pistol case and said that he had something to trade in. We said, "Sure, no problem. What do you got?" So this guy opens the case and sitting there is a Smith & Wesson 1911 Commander with nice looking wood grips. At first I didn't think much of it, but then I noticed the letters "SC" on the slide and the little atom diagram logo. Those two things mean that the gun has a frame made with S&W's scandium alloy. After we noticed this, we said, "What do you want to trade it in for?" It was a done deal. When the guy was out of earshot, I called out "Dibbs!"

I've wanted a lightweight Commander for some time. The Commander is basically a 1911 Government model pistol with the barrel and slide shortened. Not a lot, just enough. As Goldilocks would say, it is just right. The lightweight frame is made from aluminum instead of steel like the regular guns. This makes

for a gun that gives you that full-sized handgun confidence, while giving you a package that carries so much better. This is the sweet spot in a carry gun. Not as concealable as some guns, the 1911 design is slim enough to let the gun get by. The grip length is unchanged from the Government model, so eight round magazines work beautifully.

The Scandium alloy is lighter and stronger than regular aluminum alloy. It also adds some additional cost to the gun because Scandium is hideously expensive. They use so little of it making the frames, but that little bit adds all the difference—like a little habanero pepper in your pot of chili. All this adds up to a lightweight commander-sized gun that is noticeably lighter than your normal lightweight commander. I had to have it. As soon as I recognized what it was, I had to have it.

Long time readers know I have a weakness for .45s. I make no apologies for that. This is an addiction that I savor. Really, other than it being light and easy to pack, there is nothing expressly special about this gun. It is very reliable, which is a requirement for any carry gun.

Continued on page 16

S&W has made another classic. While the 1911sc model is no longer available, it lives on under the name 1911PD. These are the best lightweight commanders ever made.

SW1911SC SPECS

Receiver	Scandium Alloy Frame
Stock	Checkered Cocobolo Wood Grips
Sights	Novak Low Profile Sights
Overall Length	7.95 in.
Barrel Length	4.25 in.
Action	Single Action
Weight	28 oz.
Magazine Capacity	8+1
M.S.R.P.	\$1,029 US



The gun looks great riding in a Galco Combat Master holster. The lightweight Commander sized gun carries beautifully, all day long without discomfort or fatigue.

The accuracy is well above par, but not exceptional. The finish is handsome, but not noteworthy. The grips are the same way; good looking but not jaw dropping. Nothing stands out, but the sum of all the qualities is greater than the parts. Like a BMW. Nothing all that fantastic about any one aspect of your given BMW automobile, but it is a well balanced car with all the right qualities in all the right places that makes it such a fantastic car.

Yes, right now I'm missing my old red 325Si with the saddle brown leather. I don't know why I ever gave that car up. That simple inline 6 engine was pure joy. Anyway, this scandium .45 is just like all that distilled into a handgun. The only thing that I need to do with this gun is get some tritium night sights installed, and that's not a problem. By the time you read this, that will have happened. The rest of the gun: trigger, ejection, it's all right where I like it.

There is a little trade off in making a .45 this light. Recoil. The recoil is not bad at all, and any healthy human should be able to shoot this just fine. However there is a noticeably stronger push from any given load between this scandium .45 and my alloy framed Kimber. If I'm shooting IDPA, I'll use my Tactical Custom II pistol, no questions. But if I'm going to carry a gun on my hip all day long, this is the one. I've shot it enough to be perfectly comfortable with it. I can make

good solid Ten Ring hits with it as fast as I please. And I am pleased with the reliability. I still don't know what it looks like jammed. I can't ask any more from any handgun than that.

One thing I really like about the Smith 1911s are the factory eight round magazines. They don't use the old Colt typemagazine. They use something similar to the Mec-Gars or Wilson Combats. This makes the magazines easier to load and more reliable in operation. I've used these S&W magazines in other 1911 type pistols and other 1911 type magazines in the Smiths with no problems at all. Dare I say it? I like these mags just as much as I like my Wilson Combat or Kimber Pro magazines. These mags are undoubtedly one of reasons these pistols are so reliable.

I've got three minor nags on the gun that I'm going to point out. I do this not because these nags are all that bothersome, I just like to find anything that could be improved. If there is something wrong with a gun, I'm not going to put lipstick on it. I don't care who made the gun (just go back and read my HK P2000 review). With this gun, the first thing I have to say is the lack of tritium in the sights. I know I say that in every review, but I firmly believe in it. A serious use gun has got to have night sights.

Moving on, the other thing is the front strap of the grip/frame. Instead of just leaving it smooth or checkering it, they put these weird vertical stripes on it. I guess they work in that it minimizes the gun torquing in the hand during firing, but anything would be better than this. I'd rather it be smooth so I could just use some skateboard tape there. I still might do that later, but I'll hold off until I'm sure I want to do that. Skateboard

tape is wonderful stuff. It's easy to apply to any gun. Just take off the grips and wrap the tape around the front and put the grips back on so the tape is tucked in nice and neat. Or you can just cut the tape to shape and just slap it on like a sticker. Done. But use sparingly because you really can have too much of a good thing.

The last thing is a nit pick, but I'm picking this nit because too many 1911 type guns suffer the same thing. The safety lever on the side of the frame, it bugs me. When it is off safe, the lever snaps up into position with a noticeable click. A good solid click. A click that says "you've just made your weapon safe." That's nice. I like that. Nothing wrong with that. But when you move the lever to take the gun off safe to fire it there is no click. It's more of a mushy roll over a slight imperfection in the road. Like a limousine running over unworthy peasants. Sometimes you don't even notice it happened. Since my shooting grip puts my thumb right there at the lever, I always know what the position is, but that's just because I'm used to the 1911 platform. If I were a novice, this wouldn't be such a good thing. This lever should at least have more of a tactile response when dropping the safety. I might have a gunsmith do this, but it is nothing I'm going to worry about any time soon. I've had other 1911s that had this worse, so much so that in some holsters the safety would get bumped off and I'd never know it until I drew the weapon and found it. "Whoa, I'm off safe with a single action with a loaded chamber!" This is not a pleasant surprise.

I don't remember if I have ever mentioned it, but the 1911 is a single action automatic. For you guys and gals



Mark From South Africa, and Wes from Utah giving the S&W 1911sc a test drive using a Colt Gold Cup as a benchmark. The S&W won easily.



Mark from South Africa and Travis from Utah are running the Smith gun against an AR-15 pistol. The greater volume of fire from the AR couldn't match the hard hitting precision of the .45... think of a surgeon swinging a mace.

new to handguns this means the trigger does only one thing. It drops the hammer to fire the gun. Other types of trigger actions involve the trigger pull cocking the hammer to one extent or the other. The 1911's trigger just fires the gun. Period. The triggers on most 1911s are a short and crisp four to five pound pull. I have all mine set at four pounds, even if I have to have a gunsmith do it. There are two external safeties on a 1911. One that I've already mentioned is the thumb safety on the side of frame, and the other is the grip safety. This is disengaged the moment you grab the pistol.

To load a 1911 you fill up the magazine with your selected rounds, insert the magazine into the frame, and rack the slide. Then you push the safety lever up into the safe position. Then you put the gun into the holster. Done. Some guys like to top off the magazine again by ejecting it, replacing the now missing last round (or is it the first?) and then popping the magazine back in. To fire the 1911, you simply draw the weapon and point it at the unfortunate thing you want to destroy, thumb that safety lever down and pull the trigger. The 1911 is best carried like this. This is called "Condition One" or "Cocked and Locked". This the hammer back, on safe, with a loaded chamber. It might seem dangerous to the untrained, but trust me, it is perfectly safe. The 1911 has a better safety track record than some new fangled automatics which have trigger systems called "Safe Actions". Well, the best safety is the one I like to call: "KEEP YOUR BLOODY FINGER OFF THE BLOODY TRIGGER!" If you can't manage that one, you have no business with handling firearms whatsoever. Not even a BB gun. I'd be hesitant to even let you


handle a water pistol. Americans have been running around with guns carried cocked and locked since before the 1911 came out, and they've all done just fine with it. So don't freak out if you see your local Sheriff with a gun that has the hammer cocked. I'm pretty sure he meant for it to be like that.

A lot of guys have questioned whether or not S&W can make a decent 1911. Well, they can and they have been for a very long time before they ever actually put out a 1911 gun. You see, S&W makes the frames and slides for other gun companies, one of which has built a huge reputation for making great 1911 guns. So yeah, S&W knows how to build them.

Other guys cringe at the thought of buying a Smith & Wesson because of the deal S&W signed with the Department of Urban Housing. I won't go into the details of the agreement, but basically S&W stabbed the American shooter in the back with that agreement. Well, that was done back when S&W was owned by a British parent company and staffed with a team of executive morons. All those guys are out. S&W is All American again and the executives are some top dogs that know how to run icon class American institutions like Harley Davidson and John Deer—guys who understand heritage. Essentially, Smith & Wesson is a whole new company and not one single executive remains from The Agreement days. Since those days, S&W has come out with a lot of really cool new stuff like the X-frame revolvers in .460 and .500 Magnum, the M&P rifles and pistols, the eight shot (8 SHOTS!) TRR8 .357 mag revolver with a tactical light rail (which was an idea I had many moons ago and drew what it would look

like and posted it online). And now they are doing 1911 pistols. From what I have been told, the guy that used to help run Harley was actually walking through the factory—something that evidently the Brit owners never did—and he sees all these 1911 frames and slides. Since this guy knows his craft, he asks a simple question. "How come none of these have the S&W logo on it?" No one could answer that question, so there you go. S&W got into the 1911 game. They are backing up their 1911s with a de facto lifetime warranty too. They don't say it, but a factory rep from S&W told me straight up that they want to become real players in this market and they are going to take care of any and all customers that have any problem with their Smith 1911s.

I like that attitude. I like this new S&W company all over again. It is better than it ever was. Calling S&W just to ask stupid questions is like calling your new best friend. Every time I've called them for whatever reasons it's like they actually want to talk to me. Not because I might place an order, or that I'm the guy that writes gun reviews for CCM, they don't really care about that. They just want to help all their customers, current or future. They want to be your gun company. This could be a carry over attitude from Harley and John Deer. They want to be your brand and have built empires with that mindset. I think S&W is on the way to that level too. Keep an eye on S&W, they are making some slick and very smart moves. They have expanded their product line across the board. They've partnered with other companies such as Crimson Trace, they've snagged up Thompson Center the makers of serious hunting rifles like the Encore Pro Hunter (last year's hottest rifle), and they are even coming out with their own new bolt action hunting rifle—something the old Smith would never have done.

I'm very happy with my new Smith. The prices on these new S&W 1911s are very good, usually about 200 bucks less than a comparable Kimber 1911. The quality and everything else about them is very good, if not excellent. Go check one out for yourself and you too could be very happy with your new Smith. 

George Hill is an NRA Certified Pistol and Personal Protection instructor and the writer and publisher of MadOgre.com. Visit his website for more information on MadOgre. www.madogre.com Photography by George.