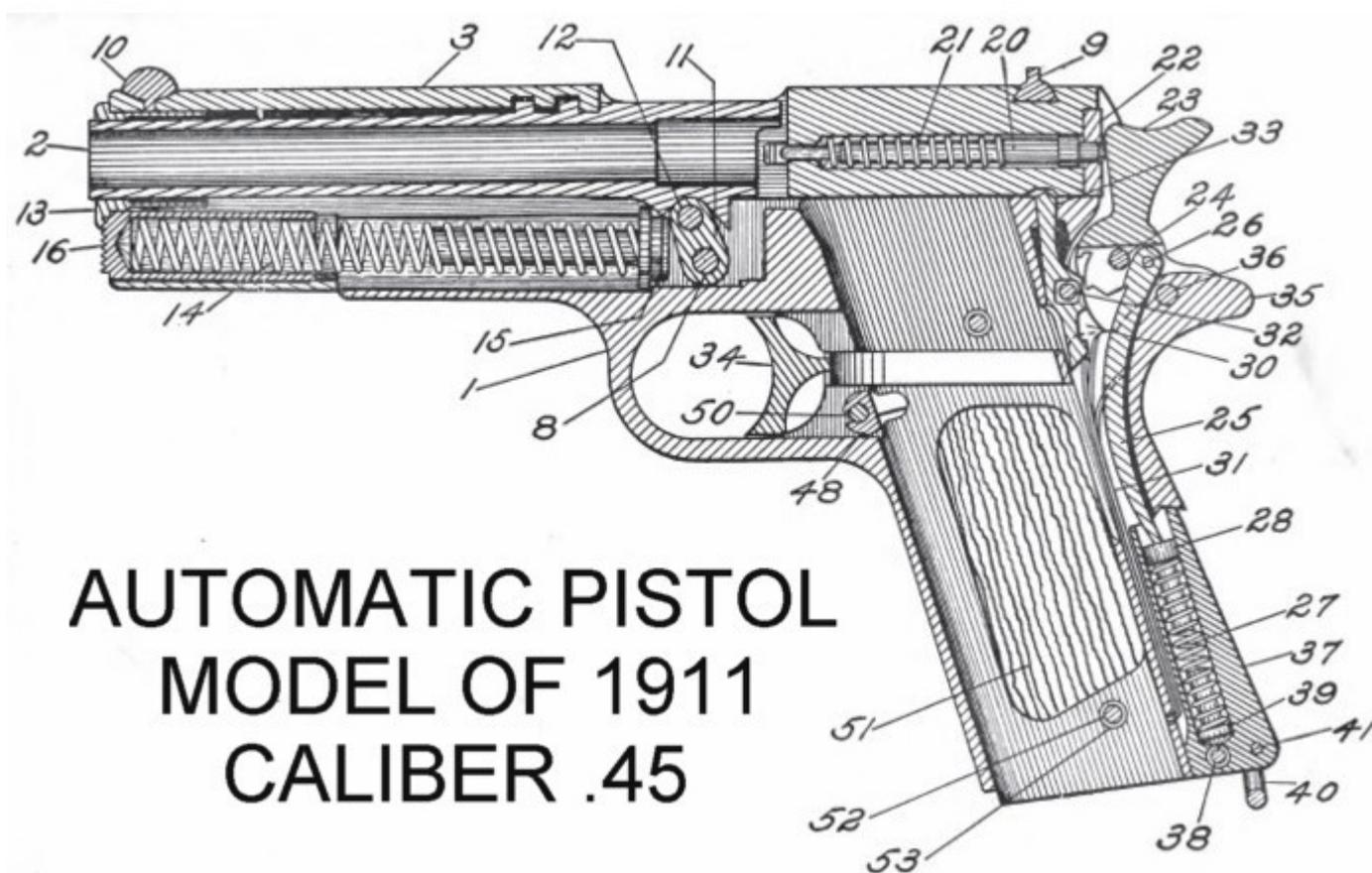


A FATAL FLAW OF THE 1911



Per Wikipedia, the Colt automatic pistol caliber-45, was adopted by the US forces in 1911. It was the standard-issue side arm from 1911 to 1985, and it still is carried by some US forces.

Due to the design of the 1911 a user does not have the option of using the P&S shooting method in which the index finger is placed along the side of the gun, pointed at a target, and the trigger pulled with the middle finger.

That is unfortunate because this is what the U.S. Army says in its Field Manual 3-23.35: Combat Training With Pistols M9 AND M11 (June,2003), about pointing and aiming:

"Everyone has the ability to point at an object.

"When a soldier points, he instinctively points at the feature on the object on which his eyes are focused. An impulse from the brain causes the arm and hand to stop when the finger reaches the proper position.

"When the eyes are shifted to a new object or feature, the finger, hand, and arm also shift to this point.

"It is this inherent trait that can be used by a soldier to rapidly and accurately engage targets."

With P&S you get automatic and correct sight alignment, and automatic and accurate target engagement.

The reason P&S can't be used with the 1911, is because the slide stop pin sticks out from the side of the 1911, and if the index finger is placed along its side and presses on the slide stop pin with firing, the 1911 can jam.



Cautionary language against using P&S with the 1911 is found in the original manual on the 1911 which was published April 1, 1912. The language is on page 12.

Here is that language as it appears, with highlighting added by me:

IMPORTANT POINTS.

1. Never place the trigger finger within the trigger guard until it is intended to fire and the pistol is pointed toward the target.

2. Do not carry the pistol in the holster with the hammer cocked and safety lock on, except in an emergency.

If the pistol is so carried in the holster, cocked and safety lock on, the butt of the pistol should be rotated away from the body when withdrawing the pistol from the holster, in order to avoid displacing the safety lock.

3. The trigger should be pulled with the forefinger. If the trigger is pulled with the second finger, the forefinger extending along the side of the receiver is apt to press against the projecting pin of the slide stop and cause a jam when the slide recoils.

4. Care must be exercised in inserting the magazine to insure its engaging with the magazine catch.

The text reads: "3. The trigger should be pulled with the forefinger. If the trigger is pulled with the second finger, the forefinger extending along the side of the receiver is apt to press against the projecting pin of the slide stop and cause a jam when the slide recoils."

That same cautionary language, or language close to it, is repeated in other military manuals published in later years. Those that I have found are dated: 1912, 1915, 1917, 1918, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1929, and 1941. And I am sure that there are many more manuals. which I am unaware of.

THE CONFLICT

On one hand, we have the US Army of today saying that a soldier can inherently, rapidly and accurately engage targets by pointing at them.

On the other hand, we have the US Military manuals of old prohibiting the use of that effective method of aiming and shooting because of the design of the 1911.

Also, we now know, due to modern science and the study of thousands of police combat cases that:

1. Sight Shooting is not or can not be used in most all Close Quarters Battle situations due to lack of time, bad lighting, the loss of near vision caused by the automatic activation of our Fight or Flight response, etc., and

2. if you are going to be shot and killed, there is a 80% chance it will happen at less than 21 feet.

So knowing of, and being able to use an optional, practical, and effective shooting method such as P&S, could be critical to the survival of a 1911 user.

FATAL CONSEQUENCES

The US Military did not fix the slide stop flaw of the 1911, so that optional shooting method was not

available to the 1911 user.

As to why a fix to the 1911 was not made, one can only wonder.

The Sight Shooting Vs Point Shooting argument of today, was alive and well way back in 1835. And even though modern science and studies say that Sight Shooting won't or can't be used in most all Close Quarters Battle situations, Sight Shooting purists advocate that one must **always** use the sights.

I have no doubt that "Sight Shooters" were in charge back in the early 1900's, and based on what one reads on the web, they still are in most places in the world of the gun.

Here is language from the US Army's FM 23-35 - Combat Training With Pistols M9 And M11 (2003): **"The soldier should use his sights when engaging the enemy unless this would place the weapon within arm's reach of the enemy"** (See the first paragraph of Chapter 2 - Section II - Combat Marksmanship).

Based on such language, the 1911 was good to go as is, and with nothing needed to be fixed.

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Now, it is logical and reasonable that:

1. repeating the caution/prohibition against using P&S with the 1911 in manuals from 1912 until 1942, effectively squelched the use of P&S in the United States, and
2. its mantra like repetition, gave rise to the dogmatic belief in the gun world that the only way to shoot a pistol is with the index finger on the trigger.

The 1911 was used in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam..., so there obviously would have been thousands and thousands of Close Quarters Battle situations when P&S could have been used were it not for the flaw in its design.

And NOT having that use option, would have resulted in hundreds if not thousands of U.S. casualties over the 70+ year reign of the 1911.

The proof of that being the case, or not being the case, is lacking. What is known is that the established and long standing rate in CQB situations is less than 20%. So, it is reasonable and logical that it would have been same in earlier times as the handgun training then and now, was and is basically the same.

THE TOKAREV FIX

The Tokarev pistol produced by the Soviets, was very similar to the Browning design. 1.5 million were produced, and a simple 2 pronged clip was used to fix the design flaw of the slide stop.



NOT PRETTY, BUT EFFECTIVE

Here are pics of two Serbian Zastava pistols of the same design and with the same fix.



Note: The US Army's 2003 combat pistol manual calls for the use of an isosceles like stance and **Quick-Fire Point Shooting** for shooting at night or at less than 15 feet. (See Chapter 2 of the manual.)

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MORE KNOCKS ON THE 1911

THE 1911 IS NOT A NATURAL POINTER

The 1911 is not a natural pointer like a pistol, which when placed in the hand is directly on the target.



When the 1911 is placed in the hand and gripped, the gun muzzle will point down due to its grip angle.



And because of that, the wrist must be cocked upward to bring the 1911 in line with the target.





WWII soldiers were told that after a little practice, this adjustment will become instinctive.

However, just saying something does not make it so. And the problem with having to cock the wrist upwards, is that with firing, the gun will jump in your hand. So you will have to check the guns alignment before firing each shot to assure accuracy. And in the extreme stress of Close Quarters Battle that is not likely to happen.

The mantra: "front site press" "front site press" may have come into being as a practical reminder and means for addressing this issue.

HOW TO GET A FREE COPY OF THE ORIGINAL 1911 MANUAL

The drawing at the start of this article on the M1911, is from the April 1, 1912 publication: Description Of The Automatic Pistol, Caliber .45, Model Of 1911.

Both Microsoft and Google have made e-copies of the 1912 manual which was updated in 1914. They are in the public domain.

[Here is a link to the Microsoft version.](#)

On the left side of the page, you can read the manual or download it as a PDF, B/W PDF, EPUB, Kindle, Daisy, Full Text, or DiVu. I have checked out the PDF's, and text versions.

[Here is a link to the Google version that is on the web. Click on the arrow and PDF on the right side to download.](#)

THE MECHANICAL PERFORMANCE OF THE 1911

Criticism of the 1911, does not take away from its pure mechanical performance. It was the winner of the 1910 shoot off test.

[This link is to the test info.](#) And this is the URL:
<http://www.sightm1911.com/lib/history/background.htm#IMAGE>

Here is language from it:

"...In November 1910, the second competitive range test was held on weapons improved as a

result of field trials, but problems were still noted with both designs. Both firms went back to the drawing board preparing for the next round of testing. On 15 March 1911, an endurance test was held. The test involved having each gun fire 6000 rounds, with cleaning after every one hundred shots fired, then allowing them to cool for 5 minutes. After every 1000 rounds, the pistol would be cleaned and oiled. After firing those 6000 rounds, the pistols were then tested with deformed cartridges, rusted in acid or submerged in sand and mud.²⁰

By the end of the test, the Savage design suffered over 37 incidents of malfunction or breakage; the Colt did not have one. On 23 March 1911, the evaluation committee's report stated,

"Of the two pistols, the board was of the opinion that the Colt is superior, because it is more reliable, more enduring, more easily disassembled when there are broken parts to be replaced, and more accurate..."

"Of the two pistols, the board was of the opinion that the Colt is superior, because it is more reliable, more enduring, more easily disassembled when there are broken parts to be replaced, and more accurate..."

End.