

The What? From Where?

TARA's New TM-9X

By James Tarr

Photos by Yamil Sued





ew models of existing firearm designs are common. New firearm models from current gun manufacturers are pretty common as well. New guns from companies completely new to the firearm business? Not so common.

So, it was with great interest and anticipation that I picked up the TARA TM-9X from my FFL. TARA Aerospace AD manufactures aviation safety and rescue systems, most notably ejection seat propulsion devices and countermeasure chaff cartridges to protect aircraft from guided missiles. They've recently gotten into firearms manufacturing and have a small arms division.

Just as interesting to me as their aviation products is the fact that they are located in Montenegro. The TM-9X pistol is currently in testing with the Montenegrin armed forces, as is the TARA TM-M4A1, an M4 clone.

Most Americans have no idea where foreign countries are unless they're planning to vacation or fight a war there, and maybe not even then, so let me get you up to speed. Montenegro is an industrialized country in the Balkans, formerly part of



Yugoslavia, with a much higher per-capita income than any of its neighbors. Montenegro is a majority Christian constitutional republic and member of NATO, but it is small, just over 5,000 square miles, which makes it slightly smaller than Connecticut. It's located west of the bootheel of Italy, across the Adriatic Sea. Now to the pistol:

The TARA TM-9X is a polymer-framed, striker-fired 9mm pistol. The most unusual aspect of the pistol to me is the double-action trigger system, but let's cover the rest of the pistol before we dive into that.

The TM-9X sports a 4.44-inch barrel and overall is 7.36 inches

The magazine releases are square, steel, serrated, and can be found on either side of the TM-9X.

long and 5.47 inches tall. It is 30mm (1.18 inches) wide and with an empty magazine in place weighs 27.5 ounces. Magazine capacity in this 9mm pistol is 17, and three magazines are provided with the gun. TARA was smart with the magazines — they are made by Mec-Gar, the kings of OEM pistol magazines, and use steel magazine bodies that are otherwise identical to the S&W M&P tubes (also made by Mec-Gar) but for the magazine release cutout. If you've got favorite aftermarket basepads for the M&P magazines (10-8, TTI, etc.), they'll work with these mags.

The TM-9X is a full-size, "duty size" pistol, although more sizes



The TM-9X is a full-size, "duty size" pistol with a profile that doesn't stray far from other, similar pistols in its class.

are planned, including a midsize version tentatively named the TMX-C with a +/- 4-inch barrel and a 15-round capacity. A quick note — this pistol was previously known as the TM-9, but after changing a bit of the slide profile, TARA has renamed the current version the TM-9X, and it is part of the planned TMX series of pistols.

In appearance, the TM-9X is vaguely reminiscent of a number of other pistols while having its own unique silhouette. One thing you should quickly note is the low bore. The Glock became so popular in large part because it was very shootable, and most of that is due to the low bore, which reduces felt recoil and muzzle rise.

The TM-9X sports a slightly lower bore than a Glock 17, which by itself is quite impressive, although you'll need calipers to measure the difference.

The barrel and the slide of the TM-9X are machined from stainless steel and given a corrosion resistant finish. In fact, not needing to reinvent the wheel, TARA buys slide blanks in Italy ... the same slide blanks from the same supplier Glock uses. If you're curious, the slides are X19NiCrMo4 steel and given a gas nitride finish.

The barrel is integrally ramped and has traditional lands-and-grooves rifling. The recoil assembly features two standard coil springs, one inside the other,

both captured. You don't need to pull the trigger to disassemble the pistol, and the takedown lever on the left side of the frame is very flat.

The sights are a simple 3-dot setup. The dots are white, and the sight bodies are steel. Both the front and rear are dovetailed in place. The top of the slide is completely flat, which I like in a pistol as I've found it helps align the gun at speed — it's a runway for your eyes.

Front and rear on the slide you will see wide, flat-bottomed serrations that are nicely aggressive whether you've got bare hands or are wearing gloves. On the left side of the slide, you'll



TM-9X

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Type | Double-action striker-fired semiauto |
| Cartridge | 9mm |
| Capacity | 17+1 rds. |
| Barrel | 4.44 in. |
| Overall Length | 7.36 in. |
| Weight | 27.5 oz. (with magazine) |
| Width | 1.18 in. |
| Height | 5.47 in. |
| Finish | Gas nitride |
| Safety | Internal striker/drop |
| Sights | Steel, 3-dot |
| Trigger | 7.25 lbs. (as tested, 7.7 lbs. spec) |
| Accessories | Three magazines, three backstraps, zippered soft case |
| MSRP | \$529 |

Manufacturer TARA Aerospace
Imported by TARA LLC
tarapistols.com

see TM-9X TARA AEROSPACE, and on the right, the caliber, as well as the serial number on the slide and the barrel, as is the case with every pistol made overseas these days. On the right side of the polymer frame, you'll see the importer name, TARA LLC. out of Jacksonville, FL. The slide-to-barrel-to-frame fit on this pistol was

as good as any striker-fired pistol I've tested and better than most.

The triggerguard is a bit oversized. There's a little texturing on the front of it, and the underside has a minor relief cut to accommodate the fingers of your support hand. At the front of the frame, you'll see a four-slot MIL STD 1913 picatinny rail, which is large enough to fit any weapon light on the market.

The magazine release is a square steel serrated button. Actually, it's two, as you'll find one on either side of the pistol. There's only one slide release, and while it is quite low profile, I found I had no problems using it to drop the slide on a loaded magazine. I was working with bare hands, so if you're wearing gloves, your experience may differ.

While at first glance it may appear that the polymer grip frame is all one piece, this pistol in fact sports interchangeable backstraps, and a total of three are included with the pistol. To swap out the backstraps, you'll want to use the disassembly tool cleverly hidden in the butt of the gun. With the magazine out, if you look inside the frame, you'll see a



Simple 3-dot steel sights top the TM-9X and are dovetailed in place.

small square on the back wall of the magazine well. Push that in, and you'll see it was the detent holding the tool (which contains the steel lanyard loop) inside the grip. The tool is basically a punch, and you'll use it to push out the pin at the top rear of the frame. Once that pin is out, the backstrap comes right out.

You'll see the backstraps are marked for size on the inside — S, M, L, with the medium installed at the factory. The small is noticeably flatter than the large, but there isn't a huge difference in size.

The texturing on the grip is interesting. On the sides of the grip, the texturing is inlaid hexagons. On the front and back of the frame are more small hexagons but raised in a three-dimensional pattern that is aggressive enough to keep your hand in place while shooting.

Now to the trigger. TARA makes this pistol with two different trigger systems, the Semi Precocked Enhanced Action Reset (SPEAR) and the Double Action Rapid Engagement (DARE). The version currently being imported into the U.S. has the DARE trigger. The SPEAR trigger system is a more traditional striker-fired pistol

design. The DARE is interesting, because it is a true double-action (DA) trigger pull.

People forget that "back in the day," the short/lighter/no manual safety Glock trigger system was controversial. The shorter/lighter trigger pull of a striker-fired gun might intimidate some people, especially since most of those pistols don't have manual safeties. Other people might be moving over from double-action/single-action (DA/SA) pistols or even revolvers. As TARA says, "The DARE trigger system allows for fast and simple training of new users and for a smooth transition for those who come from old conventional systems."

As it is a DA trigger pull, if for some reason there is a light strike on a cartridge, you can just pull the trigger again. The trigger itself is polymer, and unlike with most striker-fired pistols, there is no safety lever on its smooth, curved face. You don't need that (drop-safety) lever there, as there is absolutely no tension on the striker when it is at rest, making it drop-safe.

Where you see the trigger at rest is where the DA trigger pull starts. DA trigger pull is consistent, with only a little bit of stack at the end. Total trigger travel in DA (measured at the tip of the trigger) is almost exactly .75 inches. Advertised trigger pull on the DARE system is 3.5 kilograms (7.7 pounds), and my sample weighed in at 7.25 pounds. The trigger is easy to stage and shoot, almost like a single action, simply by paying attention to the position of the trigger — it breaks just as it reaches the front of the frame.

However, unlike with a revolver, to fire the next shot, you do not need to release all the way back



TARA's magazine accepts your favorite aftermarket basepads meant to fit standard S&W M&P mags.

to its starting point. It is not a double-action only (DAO) trigger system but instead similar to that found in DA/SA semiautos. After you fire your first shot double action, you only need release the trigger a bit, as the reset is a shockingly short 3mm (roughly .125-inch). I found that the trigger reset spring is quite strong, so riding the reset under recoil takes a bit of practice — at first, you'll find the trigger resetting all the way. But if you like riding a short reset, once you get used to the reset spring weight, you'll be able to shoot this pistol as fast as most striker-fired pistols with conventional trigger systems. In ersatz single-action/short reset mode, the trigger pull isn't any lighter, just shorter.

Performance

| Load | Velocity (fps) | Extreme Spread | Standard Deviation | Best Group (in.) | Avg. Group |
|------------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|------------|
| Wilson XTP 115 gr. | 1,204 | 27 | 14 | 2.4 | 2.8 |
| Black Hills FMJ 115 gr. | 1,155 | 33 | 17 | 2.6 | 3.1 |
| Black Hills TAC-XP+P 115 gr. | 1,179 | 24 | 11 | 2.1 | 2.7 |
| Hornady JHP+P 124 gr. | 1,122 | 30 | 15 | 2.8 | 3.7 |
| Federal HST 147 gr. | 947 | 34 | 13 | 2.3 | 3.3 |

Accuracy results are the averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured with an Oehler Model 35 12 feet from the muzzle.

Do I think this trigger system is better? No, but you might. It's not objectively worse, just totally and truly different. Better than that, it works as advertised, giving consumers another quality option, which I'm all for. If this trigger system intrigues you but you don't have the interest (or budget) for a whole new gun, the Lightning Tap Double Action Short Reset Trigger for the Glock Gen 3 17/19 (etc.) is basically this same trigger system for a Glock, made under the same patent. It's sold exclusively through recoilstore.com.

Heading to the range was fun. This is a full-size gun chambered in 9mm, so of course recoil was mild and controllable. There was a learning curve with the trigger, though. Normally, I don't ride the trigger before starting to pull back again. If I did that with the TARA, I found myself with a double-action trigger pull each time. But once I had a box of ammo downrange, I was getting into the groove. I put over 200 rounds through the pistol without any problems.

More options are always better. The TM-9X gives you a reliable, modern pistol with a unique trigger system, from an unexpected source, at a very reasonable price. 🇺🇸