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# HOLDING THE AREX REX ZERO ZERO

■ IN THE FIREARMS WORLD, THERE

are many handguns on the modern market, most of which are made to sell and some of which are made as cheaply as possible. I don't stake my life on ironmongery but only on quality firearms, and among service-grade handguns worthy of critical use, the list is short. For a new handgun to enter the market and prosper, considerable research and development — as well as expertise in manufacture — are needed. The Arex Rex Zero 1 is a modern 9mm pistol that makes the grade based on sound engineering, quality manufacture and good materials.



■ Though it is certainly a duty-sized pistol rather than a compact, the Rex Zero is a solid choice for anyone looking for full-sized defense at a reasonable price.

## SPECIFICATIONS

**CALIBER:** 9MM LUGER (9X19MM)  
**OPERATING PRINCIPLE:** SHORT RECOIL  
**ACTION:** MODIFIED BROWNING LINKLESS LOCKING SYSTEM  
**TRIGGER SYSTEM:** SA/DA; HAMMER FIRED  
**LENGTH:** 7.7 INCHES • **BARREL LENGTH:** 4.3 INCHES  
**HEIGHT:** 5.7 INCHES • **WIDTH (SLIDE):** 0.98 INCHES  
**WIDTH (FRAME):** 1.1 INCHES • **MAGAZINE CAPACITY:** 17  
**WEIGHT (WITHOUT MAGAZINE):** 29 OUNCES  
**MAGAZINE WEIGHT (EMPTY):** 3 OUNCES  
**WIDTH (SAFETY LEVERS):** 1.46 INCHES  
**TRIGGER PULL (SA):** 5.5 POUNDS  
**TRIGGER PULL (DA):** 13 POUNDS  
**TRIGGER TRAVEL (DA):** 0.5 INCHES  
**RESET TRAVEL (SA):** 0.16 INCHES  
**BARREL PROFILE:** 6 GROOVES; RIGHT-HAND TWIST  
**BARREL TWIST RATE:** 9.8 INCHES  
**MSRP:** \$670

The pistol is an upgrade on proven handguns in several regards. I prefer topical research to historical research, but the pistol's makers in Slovenia have an excellent reputation for producing military wares. This is their first handgun, but, then again, performance is more impressive than lineage. The pistol isn't an exact clone of an existing unit, although it relies heavily on the SIG P226 for its template. The pistol shows technical virtuosity in design, and aesthetic appeal is mixed with structural stability.

As stated, the Rex Zero is a service-sized pistol that bears a resemblance to the SIG P226. It is a locked-breech design, meaning the pistol locks up by butting the barrel hood into the slide in Glock/SIG fashion and unlocks by use of angled camming surfaces. A solid guide rod and dual-wound spring set control recoil, and the slide is nicely machined — with no visible tool marks — and finished in a well-polished blue. My example is the Flat Dark Earth version, with a dark finish on the frame.

The cocking serrations are well-cut and properly angled, which can be a useful addition to any pistol. The sights are service-grade, and they offer good visibility for rapid sight acquisition. The hammer is conventional and compact enough to offer minimal snagging when worn concealed, and there is sufficient surface area for easy manual cocking. The double-action trigger is a SIG type: The trigger is pressed and an internal draw bar moves to the rear, both cocking and dropping the hammer.

The slide recoils on firing, cocking the hammer for subsequent single-action shots. The frame features nicely pebbled grips that offer good adhesion and abrasion. The two supplied magazines accommodate 17 9mm Luger cartridges. The frame features a modern light rail for mounting combat lights or lasers, and the pistol breaks down in SIG/Beretta fashion by use of a rotating lever on the frame. The pistol resembles the SIG P226, and the grip size is between the original P226 and the small-framed P226.

The primary difference between the Rex Zero and the P226 is in the controls. The Rex Zero features a fully ambidextrous maga-



zine release. The Rex Zero decocker is in the same location as the SIG's, and this handy, ergonomic lever has been praised as a model of efficiency. The Arex design is a combination lever. When the slide is locked to the rear, the decocking lever is pressed to release it. To safely decock and drop the hammer, the decocking lever is pressed again.

I have practiced manipulating the lever and have used it quickly on the range. At no time have I been able to short-circuit the operation and cause the hammer to drop — save when I intended it to. The lever works as designed and makes for an improvement on the SIG design. The lever is efficient in a manner similar to the HK P7M8 cocking lever, which also drops the slide.

Economy of motion isn't the only advantage. The original SIG slide lock is located on an area of the frame that invites shooters to ride the thumb on the lever during firing. This results in the slide failing to lock to the rear on the last shot and is difficult to train out of shooters' technique, in my experience. The re-design is a good move in the practical and tactical sense.

In addition to the combination lever, the Rex Zero also has a manual safety. A person who prefers the standard double-action first shot with decocker might ignore the manual safety, while others might carry it applied. The safety might be used with the hammer forward or to the rear. Carrying the handgun cocked and the safety on isn't really cocked and locked carry, as the slide isn't locked, an inferior system to the 1911. However, most selective double-action handguns, such as the CZ 75, do not feature a decocker.

The addition of the safety gives the user more options. The manual safety can be applied hammer down, which might limit the ability of a felon to fire the handgun if a gun-grab is successful. A real



advantage is during tactical movement.

When using a double-action-first-shot handgun, safe movement demands that the pistol is decocked while moving. With the Rex Zero, you need only place the pistol on safe.

Then simply take the pistol off safe and you are back with a short single-action trigger press rather than having to go through the long double-action trigger press again. This is a clear tactical advantage. (If the standard SIG-type operating procedure is used, the safety can be ignored.) The double-action trigger press is heavier than some but smooth, and the single-action trigger breaks at a clean 4.2 pounds.

## SHOTS FIRED

Before heading to the range, I lubricated this specific Rex Zero on the long bearing surfaces, cocking block and barrel hood. I loaded the magazines four rounds at a time and then tapped them to properly seat the cartridges until the magazines were full at 17.

For this review, I employed a handload combining the Hornady 124-grain XTP and enough WW 231 powder for 1,100 feet per second. I drew and fired at man-sized targets at 5, 7 and 10 yards; getting a first-shot hit in the "X"-ring isn't difficult at 5 or 7 yards but demands attention to detail at 10 — a not-altogether-unreasonable distance in personal defense. Each magazine made one ragged hole at 10 yards. Align the sights and press the trigger ... and you have a hit. The Rex is controllable and recoil isn't a problem.

I also fired 20 rounds of the Hornady American Gunner 124-grain XTP +P, which proved similarly controllable and accurate. I extended firing to 15 and 25 yards, firing at paper targets and steel gongs with excellent results.

The only drawback I found in firing the pistol was that I had to shift my grip to actuate the magazine release. My hands are of average size and my fingers are short, and I wound up using my trigger finger to hit the release. Since the magazine release is ambidextrous, this works well; perhaps using the forefinger isn't ideal, but the magazine release isn't likely to drop the magazine by holster pressure or being bumped.

A service-grade handgun should be reliable with every type of quality 9mm ammunition. The Rex Zero is nearing 1,500 cartridges over a year's time, including many +P and +P+ loads as well as handloads. There have been no failures to feed, chamber, fire or eject. Standard-pressure loads generate 35,000 pounds per square inch, while +P loads are at 38,500 and +P+ loads even greater. Not every handgun will function properly with high-pressure loads, and some show excessive wear on the small parts with a steady diet of +Ps. The Rex Zero has never failed.

Despite the extra momentum of the heavy loads, the pistol was never uncomfortable to fire, even using the DoubleTap 115-grain +P+ at 1,380 feet per second. Practical accuracy and hit probability were both good. Using a Bullshooter rest, I fired the pistol for absolute accuracy, which, while perhaps not combat-relevant, reflects build quality. I used several 147-grain loads, including the Fiocchi 147-grain JHP and the Fiocchi Extrema 147-grain XTP.

The pistol proved capable of excellent accuracy. I fired several five-shot groups at 25 yards, and the best were as small as 2 inches. The combination lever and safety is a genuine improvement over the original SIG P226, and the build quality is comparable to any European handgun — and that is very good.

The only downside was my difficulty in handling the magazine release, yet an argument might be made that handling isn't universal but specific to each handgun, and the manual of arms for the Rex Zero isn't difficult. The Arex Rex Zero is a credible defensive firearm with much to recommend.

