FASTER RELOADS | SAIL OFF GRID | BATTLE RIFLE (2)

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SKILLS AND SURVIVAL FOR ALL SITUATIONS

Corpsmen and Marines participate in Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC) training.

MARINE CORPS PHOTO BY LANCE CPL. ISABELLA ORTEGA

TREAT FOR SHOCK IN A TACTICAL ENVIRONMENT

Shock is a major-medical problem in any situation and it's imperative to treat for shock immediately.

BY PHIL DWYER

The major types of shock we are concerned with as operators, basic and advanced providers are:

hypovolemic shock
cardiogenic shock
obstructive shock
distributive shock
anaphylactic shock
metabolic shock
psychogenic shock
septic shock

This article is going to be filled with the acronym; M.A.R.C.H! (Massive Bleeding, Airway, Respiratory, Circulation, Hypothermia/Head Injury.) This is a medical treatment protocol tactical and non-tactical medical providers are using "down range" or "in theater" in the DoD and DoS. This protocol, if applied correctly and by the letter, literally, treats for shock as you treat the patient.

The best field diagnosis I know for shock/hemorrhagic shock (bleeding out) is this: If the patient presents with the following signs and symptoms after a traumatic event that insults the body and interrupts homeostasis (How our body functions normally without outside interference):

Altered Mental Status due to Mechanism of Injury. (In the absence of a Head Injury!)

Weak or absent Radial (Wrist) Pulse. (Unconscious or in and out of Consciousness!)

As a Pararescueman, I found myself in water, mountain, jungle and desert environments, in widely varying climates and weather and working within local indigenous populations, but I think it is fair to say that you only need to travel as far as Las Vegas or a U.S. continued on next page

left to right: Browning, European, and Paddle releases

PISTOL SPEED
FEEDING THE MODERN SEMI-AUTO

Modern semi-autos can have a ravenous appetite for ammunition, and who can blame them?

BY: KEN JAVES

With so many tasty high-performance offerings available in any caliber, and with manufacturers competing to bring magazines of greater and greater capacity to market, the temptation to hammer away on the trigger often overrides the forced and measured restraint practiced by their six-shooting predecessors. However large the magazine though, the time always comes when the slide locks to the rear and the gaping mouth of the chamber is exposed, crying for more. Which brings us to the topic for this month; how to ensure (in a tactically sound manner) our favorite sidearm never goes hungry and prevent us from suffering a fate worse than ammo starvation.

There are three main types of magazine releases found on modern pistols. The first (and most prolific in the U.S.) is the Browning style which consists of a button found just aft of the trigger. Traditionally, it is located on the left side of the frame, but more manufacturers are offering the capability to reverse the button for left-handed shooters. There is debate in some circles whether John Browning mistakenly placed the release on the wrong side of the frame, as it would be easier to manipulate using the trigger finger instead of the thumb for a right-handed shooter and I've seen some remarkably fast reloads from lefties shooting "right-handed" guns. The second variation is the European release where the release is located on the butt of the pistol grip, just to the rear of the magazine baseplate. Some pistols of this type release the magazine when pressed forward (HK P7) and others when pulled to the rear (Makarov variants and PPK). They provide secure retention of the magazine even if the reloading process is slightly more involved. The third is the HK/Walther-style paddle release. This release encompasses a portion of the trigger guard and is typically ambidextrous, releasing the magazine when pressed downward. In the interest of space we will be focusing on the Browning style magazine release as it is the one most commonly found on modern defensive pistols although the techniques we will be discuss-

EFFICIENT MAGAZINE PLACEMENT FOR A RIGHT-HANDED SHOOTER.

ing will only require minor tweaking if you are utilizing a weapon with a paddle release.

Occasions for reloading can be broken into two categories; when you "need to" and when you "want to" perform a reload. The need to situation arises when the slide locks to the rear on an empty magazine and the pistol cries for more. The goal is to feed it as quickly and efficiently as possible. We aim to avoid need to situations, just like we avoid driving a car until it is completely out of gas. This means I must take advantage of my tactical environment to reload my pistol when I want to and keep it gassed-up as much as I can.

NEED TO

The reloading technique utilized in a need to situation is commonly referred to as an "emergency reload" or "combat reload". The goal is to get a magazine inserted and a round chambered as quickly as possible. The stimulus that drives us to perform the following actions is the slide locking to the rear on an empty magazine.

Step 1:

A number of motions must occur simultaneously to ensure economy of motion and efficiency during the first step of the reload. First, the supporting hand (left hand for right-handed shooters) releases from the pistol grip and in the process drags along the bottom of the trigger guard which aids in rotating the pistol slightly in the grip to allow the thumb of the firing hand to fully depress the magazine release. For wrong-handed/right-brained individuals (operating a pistol configured for a right handed shooter) this is easily accomplished with either the trigger or middle fingers. This is done while the pistol is still vertical to allow the magazine to fall free and allow gravity to work on your behalf. The supporting hand continues its movement to where full magazines are stored on the belt while the firing hand positions the pistol in the shooter's "workspace". Workspace is the area in front of the shooter's face where the threat and the pistol can be viewed without moving the head. The pistol is not so close as to almost touch the shooter's nose nor at full arm extension (I have seen examples of both). It is a comfortable in-between position that allows good control and visibility with little actual movement of the pistol itself. Think of replacing the rear sight with the corner of the magazine well in space.

Problem areas: If the magazine fails to drop free the most common errors (depending on the make of the firearm and design of the release) are a failure of the shooter to fully depress the magazine release or the shooter's grip opposite the release, pinning the release bar in place and preventing it from moving. Both are corrected by shifting the pistol an appropriate amount in the firing grip. Shaking the pistol or trying to pull the magazine from the magazine well will not fix the problem.

Step 2:

While the pistol is suspended in the workspace the support hand acquires a fully-loaded magazine from the magazine pouch. When the magazines are appropriately arranged they are placed on the opposite side of the body from the holster and the front of the magazine and noses of the bullets should point toward the belt buckle. The magazine is seated as deeply in the hand as possible (to ensure a secure grip and control of the magazine) and the index finger is placed along the front of the magazine which aids in directing the magazine into the magazine well in the next step. Once a proper grip is established the magazine is withdrawn from the pouch and rotated so that the index finger is pointing toward the magazine well.

Deliberate grip on the magazine.

THERE ARE VARIOUS TECHNIQUES FOR SENDING THE SLIDE FORWARD TO CHAMBER A ROUND.

Step 3:
The index finger along the front of the magazine now guides the magazine toward and into the magazine well. At this point, I shift my vision from the target/enemy to the magazine well to ensure everything is properly aligned. Some advocate that the shooter should never take their eyes off of the threat, but I will sacrifice the fraction of a second it takes to shift my focus to ensure a successful reload rather than trust my "death-stare" to unnerve the enemy long enough to recover from a fumbled magazine insertion. Any motion on the part of the threat should still be readily apparent if the workspace is utilized correctly (the target and the pistol remain on the same plane). Once everything is aligned, the magazine is pressed, not slammed, into place.

Step 4:
Once the magazine is seated the next step is to send the slide forward, chamber a round, and reacquire the sight picture. There are various techniques for accomplishing this, but the most efficient method I have found is the use of the slide-stop. As the support hand moves to reacquire the firing grip the thumb depresses the slide-stop and the grip is established as the sights are aligned on the target. This technique also requires the least movement to re-attack should the slide-stop lever slip or fail to release the slide. Detractors will criticize this method as inferior as it relies on "fine motor skills" to perform. In response I usually pose the question, "Then what are sight alignment and trigger control?" but this is a debate for another day. As efficient as this technique is, it may not work for every make and model of pistol so we have a few other options. Next up is the slingshot technique, where the rear of the slide is grasped between the thumb and forefinger of the support hand, similar to drawing back the pocket of a slingshot. The slide is pulled slightly to the rear (allowing the slide-stop to let go) and then released to chamber a round. The firing grip is then reacquired. To prevent the hand from slipping off of the slide try to utilize as many of the rear slide serrations as possible or even gain some traction on the rear sight. The last technique I will cover here is one I refer to as the "monkey grip". In this method the rear slide serrations (on a Glock) and rear sight are grasped in an overhand manner, pressing the serrations between the palm and tips of the fingers. It allows a solid grasp of the slide but requires more movement than the previous techniques and is slightly less efficient. It can also cause problems for shooters with large hands or when wearing gloves as there is a tendency to cover the ejection port which can induce a malfunction or allow material

To prevent the hand from slipping off of the slide try to utilize as many of the rear slide serrations as possible or even gain some traction on the rear sight.

to catch on the sharp edges of some slides.

Problem areas: Some modern polymer-framed pistols will send the slide forward if struck at the right angle when inserting a magazine due to the difference in mass between the slide and frame. This is not to be trusted as the slide can release prior to the full insertion of the magazine, leaving you with an empty chamber. If this happens it should be followed up by the slingshot or monkey grip techniques.

WANT TO

The techniques utilized in a "want to" situation are commonly referred to as "tactical reloads" and with the exception of the "speed reload" the partially loaded magazine is retained somewhere on the body in the event additional ammunition is required later in the fight. Tactical reloads require slightly more time and greater dexterity to perform than the emergency reload described above so it is up to the shooter to ensure they have sufficient cover and security to buy enough time to top-up their weapon. This is routinely referred to as a "lull" in the gunfight; apparently when both sides simultaneously decide that they need a breather.

Personally, I do not like allowing the enemy to dictate the terms of the fight or decide when breaks are appropriate, so I suggest taking a more active role in controlling the lulls. If working with a team or partner, coordinate with them to ensure the antagonists are suppressed/covered (depending on your rules of engagement) sufficiently to allow you to perform a reload. When done correctly the entire team can ensure their weapons are in the best condition possible without sacrificing volume of fire or creating lapses in coverage. If alone and unafraid try to create space or confusion to buy time and place yourself in a position that affords good situational awareness and cover. If the worst case scenario occurs and you are caught flat-footed by the enemy halfway through your reload, remember that you still have one round in the chamber to deal with the problem.

The basic maneuvers are the same as the slide-lock reload with the exception that a round remains in the chamber and there is no need to release or cycle the slide. There are a number of tactical reload methods but I will stick to covering two.

Method 1:

This is the simplest technique and requires the least dexterity, but it is the most time consuming. In this method the partial magazine is removed from the pistol (once you are in a situation that allows you to perform these actions in relative tactical security of course) and retained somewhere on the shooter's body where it cannot be confused with a fully loaded magazine. Next, a fully loaded magazine is removed from the magazine pouch and inserted and positively seated in the magazine well. Since maximum speed is not a driving factor with "want to" reloads a tug on the baseplate of the magazine to ensure it is secure is not out of line and provides some insurance against a stoppage.

Method 2:

This method is more efficient than the previous, but it does require significantly more dexterity as you will be juggling two magazines with the same hand and if it is not practiced there is the chance that the magazines can be confused and the partial re-inserted into the pistol. Instead of removing the partial magazine the support hand first withdraws a fully loaded magazine from the pouch. The magazine is then placed between the middle and index fingers and the support hand is placed below the magazine well so that when the magazine release is depressed the partial magazine will drop into the palm of the support hand where it is then grasped between the thumb and index finger. The hand is then rotated to align the full magazine with the magazine well and the magazine is inserted. The final step is to retain the partial magazine (again where it cannot be confused with a full one) and reacquire a firing grip.

The "speed reload" is a variation of the "tactical reload" where the partial magazine is not retained and is typically only used in competition to preload the pistol for the next series of targets in a stage.

AMMUNITION MANAGEMENT

Certain rules have evolved concerning the management of magazines and ammunition to reduce confusion and gain an edge, however minor, in a gunfight. The first is that partial magazines are never placed into magazine pouches; they are retained in a dump pouch or a pocket somewhere on the body where they can't be mixed up with known full magazines. Unless you have the shot counting ability of a Hollywood director there is no way of knowing how many rounds remain in that partial magazine, it's going to be a bad time when you load a magazine and the slide locks to the rear after two rounds when you were expecting fifteen. The only exception to this rule is if all of your full magazines have been used and you have a pocket full of partials. You can then go through and perform triage on your remaining ammunition and stage them from most to least ammo in

Magazine positioning (upon insertion) for a tactical reload using Method 2.

Partial magazines are NEVER placed into magazine pouches; they are retained where they can't be mixed up with known full magazines.

your magazine pouches. The second rule is to save the magazines closest to your weapon (usually provide the fastest reload) for emergency reloads (those 'need to' situations). This means that all of your tactical reloads should be performed using the magazines towards the rear of your belt since time shouldn't be a driving factor.

MECHANICAL AIDS TO RELOADING

Competition and the natural desire to be better and faster has led to the development of a number of mechanical aids that can be bolted to the pistol to assist in its rapid feeding. Aftermarket magazine wells act as a funnel and are far more forgiving if the magazine isn't properly aligned and allow for faster movement and less control when inserting the magazine.

Magazine well and dot.

Aftermarket magazine wells act as a funnel and allow for faster movement and less control when inserting the magazine.

The only drawbacks are the extended length that could hinder concealment and extended magazine base pads are often required to ensure the magazine is properly seated on a reload.

I will use a paint pen and place a dot on the inside corner of the magazine well to give me a visual reference point and ensure the pistol is properly positioned for the reload.

Extended magazine releases can be purchased for most models which allow for easier manipulation of the magazine release for those with stubby fingers. Significant testing must be done to ensure the extended release is compatible with your equipment and method of carry as it can be embarrassing to have the magazine eject from a holstered pistol while running down the range.

DRY FIRE DRILLS TO PRACTICE RELOADING TECHNIQUES

The following drills can be used to improve reloading skills for both emergency and tactical reloads. As with any dry fire training or handling of firearms all firearms safety rules must be followed, a safe direction and training area established, all weapons cleared and all live ammunition removed from the area. I recommend utilizing dummy ammunition for these drills and ensure proper ammunition management is practiced in order to form good habits.

Static: Begin stationary with a single target, empty magazine inserted, and slide locked to the rear. Magazines on the belt are loaded with one dummy round. At the start of the drill perform an emergency reload and reacquire your sight picture on the target. To reset the drill simply pull the slide to the rear and the single dummy round will eject and lock the slide.

Stepping: The drill is the same as the static drill except at the start of the drill you take a single step away from the starting position while performing the reload. Imagine a clock face on the ground and for each repetition you step off toward a different number. Twelve O'clock is straight ahead, three is to the right, etc. Continue until you have worked all the way around the clock.

Reloading on the Move: Place two markers on the ground approximately ten feet apart (the angle in relation to the target can be varied to work different movement directions) begin at one marker and at the start signal perform the reload while moving to the second marker.

Swinging: Place two or more targets approximately three or more feet apart; align the sights on the first target and on the start signal pivot towards the second target while performing the reload, finishing with the sights aligned on the second target.

Tactical Reloads: My favorite method for practicing the mechanics of tactical reloads also involves emergency reloads and immediate action drills and is a great combination exercise. Begin by placing a random number of dummy rounds in each training magazine and loading the pistol, ensuring a dummy round is chambered. At the start of the drill draw the pistol and attempt to engage your target, when you get a "click" instead of a "bang" perform an immediate action drill to correct the stoppage. If the slide does not lock to the rear perform a tactical reload and re-holster. If the slide locks to the rear on the immediate action it means the magazine is empty and is the indicator to perform an emergency reload. Continue until all magazines are empty.

Any of these drills can also be performed live fire and can be increased in complexity by combining the movements and emplacing an additional target. If you typically work with a partner or as part of a tactical team I recommend working on how reloads are communicated during your range sessions to keep as many guns in the fight as possible. Pistols do get hungry and I hope the techniques outlined above help keep yours fed. ✓

BIO

Ken Javes (www.shibumitactical.com) has over 19 years of military and security contracting experience to include multiple combat and contract deployments to South West Asia. He has served with Marine Infantry and Force Reconnaissance units. He possesses instructor certifications from multiple agencies and organizations, and has trained with some of the top military and competitive shooters in the country.