

Konrad F. Schreier, Jr.

## The Silenced QSPR Revolver

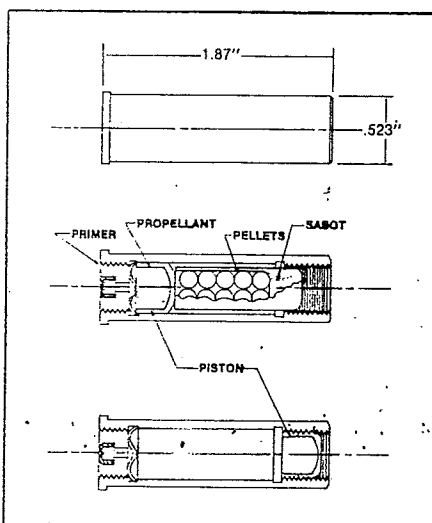
An Answer to an Age Old Military Problem

Ever since soldiers have been digging like moles, and they have been doing this ever since gunpowder came into general use, other soldiers have had to go into the burrows and roust them out. Up until late in the Vietnam War U.S. Soldiers and Marines had used anything they had for this nasty job—pistols, shotguns, submachine guns, hand grenades and explosive charges. These weapons all have their problems; their firing noise is deafening, their firing flash is blinding, it is impossible for the men to complete the job until after the smoke of firing has cleared.

To overcome this particular military problem the U.S. Army Land Warfare Laboratory developed a unique weapon called the Quite Special-Purpose Revolver; the QSPR. The QSPR handgun is a modification of the commercial S&W .44 Magnum revolver which fires what has to be the oddest revolver cartridge ever developed. The revolver itself is standard except that its cylinder is bored out to handle the QSPR ammunition and its barrel is cut down to almost nothing. The S&W .44 Magnum revolver is fitted with a .400 cal. smooth bore barrel, 1.375-inches long and without sights.

The ammunition is, on the other hand, some of the most unconventional and complicated ever loaded. The steel cartridge case is rimmed with a .523-inch body diameter and is 1.87-inches long. It is loaded with a special primer element, special propellant, a piston and a sabot containing 15 high-density lead pellets. It looks more like a blued steel shotgun shell than anything else, but its case walls are several times as thick as those of a conventional shell. Because the piston moves to the front of the cartridge when it is fired, it still looks live after it has been fired!

To fire this QSPR ammunition the revolver's trigger is pulled in the usual way and the firing pin hits the primer which then ignites the propelling charge of powder. Then things get very different. The powder gasses push the piston forward, but the piston stays in the cartridge case after propelling the sabot and its load of pellets. The piston is stopped by threads in the mouth of the cartridge case, and thus it contains virtually all of the flash, smoke



The "Quiet Cartridge" (top) external view, the casing is blued steel and unmarked in any way. (center) Cross section of loaded QSPR cartridge and (bottom) cross section of a fired cartridge. Note that the fired round externally resembles a live round. When detonated the piston moves to the case mouth and all smoke, flash and most sound is contained in the case itself.

and firing report the gun would otherwise make.

With this strange QSPR revolver and its ammunition, a combination actually used in combat during the last couple of years in Vietnam, the pellets have a muzzle velocity of about 700 feet per second which is enough to do the job. The pistol has an effective range of 30 meters (33 yards or almost 100 feet); more or less the same effective range as many low-intensity shotgun target loads.

The Army designed the QSPR and its ammunition to fill their need for a compact weapon for quick response to hostile fire in close situations like those encountered in cave-tunnel complexes. The multi-pellet load of the QSPR gives the same effect a shotgun would in situations where there is no time to aim, and it gives an edge to men who are not proficient with a pistol. The smoke, flash and noise of firing are practically eliminated by the piston QSPR cartridge, and people who have had to use it in confined situations say the system actually works.

Should a civilian happen into possession of a QSPR revolver and its ammunition, there are a couple of points about it worth noting: it is not a silenced weapon in most definitions of the term, but a weapon firing silenced ammunition. Is this a legal weapon? The QSPR's and their ammunition have only been made for the military, so any in civilian hands would have to be assumed to have been stolen from the military unless they are backed up by an ironclad bill of sale. It is possible that the QSPR revolver is illegal since it is smooth bore, and in a sense a shotgun pistol which is outlawed. In actual fact QSPR ammunition hasn't even turned up in cartridge collecting circles and there are no known collector's examples of the QSPR revolver in circulation.

This military weapon is of no earthly use to sporting shooters, but its novel ammunition system possibly could be. With the population explosion making places to shoot more and more restricted, this quiet ammunition might make it possible to shoot places where any flash or noise might otherwise make it impossible. A reloadable shotgun version of the QSPR ammunition could be fired in modified shotguns to make shotgun target shooting acceptable where it otherwise would be prohibited. The ammunition would seem to lend itself to very close muzzle velocity control and the shot sabot could be loaded with light iron shot. This could make it possible to use the system indoors and shoot skeet or trap in a gymnasium or similar large, empty building where regular shotguns could not be used.

It would appear that the unusual QSPR form of ammunition could not be practically applied to an arm firing its projectile in a rifled barrel, however the system actually works on exactly the same principle as a spring air rifle. The powder charge and piston of the QSPR ammunition equal the spring and piston of an air rifle but the QSPR has much more potential power.

At the present time there probably isn't much incentive for developing QSPR ammunition for civilian shooting use and it would be very costly sporting ammunition if it was developed. Even so, it is something to think about for the future. ☞