

POLICE HANDGUNS

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WHAT TYPE OF SIDEARM IS BEST FOR POLICE USE?

Most police want to use military type high capacity self-loading pistols due to the common misconception that they must be better than revolvers because elite soldiers use them. Their key advantage being their superior 'firepower', namely their large capacity magazines and faster reloading speed.

A world renowned US firearms trainer and writer, Chuck Taylor, reviewed over 4,000 police shooting incidents (most police used revolvers) and found that reloading figured in less than 12 cases. Not once did a reload solve the problem.

Military type pistols like Glocks are very durable and make excellent backup weapons for soldiers as they are easy to field strip, easy for raw recruits to shoot well with little training thanks to their short travel triggers, and hold lots of bullets neatly in magazines for killing as many enemy soldiers as possible, but a poor choice as primary weapons for police, whose priorities should be reliability, safety and stopping power.

The .357 Magnum revolver round has the best stopping power record of any handgun

round, which means offenders will have to be shot fewer times to stop them, saving lives.

Self-loading pistols are far more ammunition sensitive than revolvers due to an intolerance of imperfect ammunition, susceptibility to 'limp-wrist' stoppages (must be held firmly to ensure reliability) and magazine related stoppages due to metal fatigue to their springs or damaged feed lips.

French GIGN anti-terrorist police prefer revolvers to self-loading pistols as they know the former are the ideal one handed firearm that will not malfunction if it touches cover or an assailant or is held in a less than ideal fashion due to an injury or an awkward firing position.

On the issue of safety, Glocks (the most widely issued police service handgun) are notorious for accidental discharges in high stress situations due to their short travel triggers, but my biggest concern is that - like all police issue auto pistols and most revolvers - they can be used by a gun snatcher to kill the police officers who carry them, more and more of



Glock 17



Smith & Wesson 386

whom are women.

Many police deaths could have been prevented by using an automatic safety (only available for revolvers) which has been proven in police service since 1976 but rarely used due to cost (several hundred dollars).

My research has led me to conclude that the best sidearms for general police use are 7-shot Smith & Wesson .357 Magnum revolvers fitted with an automatic safety, namely the steel frame Model 686 for uniformed officers and the alloy frame Model 386 for detectives.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Revolvers are much less likely to malfunction than self-loading pistols and can be fitted with an automatic safety that will stop gun snatchers using them.

RECOMMENDATION

Law enforcement agencies should adopt .357 Magnum revolvers fitted with an automatic safety for general purpose use.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Auto Pistols: Do Police Need Them?, Richard Lutz, Human Rights Coalition (Australia), 2004.

Street Stoppers, Evan P. Marshal & Edwin J. Sanow, Paladin Press, 1996.

POLICE MARKSMAN ASSOCIATION

Pistols like the 17-shot 9mm Glock 17 are primarily adopted by police due to concerns that revolvers lack 'firepower', but research into police shooting incidents by PMA found that high capacity, low recoil handguns like this promote poor shooting. They discovered that .357 Magnum revolver armed police

had the highest hit ratio and fired the fewest rounds per incident, which suggests that limited capacity and increased recoil and noise promotes marksmanship.

Round	Capacity*	Shots Fired	Hit Ratio
.357 Magnum	6-shots	2.3 rounds	78.2%
.45 ACP (auto)	7-shots	2.7 rounds	61.5%
.38 Special	6-shots	3.6 rounds	57.3%
9mm (auto)	15-shots	5.5 rounds	47.3%
* Typical number of rounds for these handguns.			

