

HEY

, Is anybody here who hasn't heard about this legendary handheld cannon or haven't seen it in a movie or video game? Almost everyone knows that weapon but number of those, who have the opportunity to play it with on the range, especially here in Europe, is a lot less. Why? Because despite the media popularity it is not as common weapon as it seems to. Meet the .44 Magnum Desert Eagle Mk XIX!

Desert Eagle

Mk XIX in action





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BORN IN THE USA

Beginnings of that legendary pistol design (BTW, there are so many myths and stories about it...) is brake of 1970s and 1980s, when on the other side of Atlantic, the spree for big pistols with very powerful ammunition has started. In this time frame, multiple new guns in .357 Magnum and .44 Magnum appeared, and after that even bigger and more powerful .41 Magnum .454 Cassul and finally .50 Action Express, that was made especially for the Desert Eagle, were born. All those high caliber pistols were designated for steel targets shooting and for... hunting with handgun for big game that are very popular in the US.

Concept of powerful handgun chambered for powerful revolver ammunition born in the John Risdall and Jim Skildam minds, founders of Magnum Research Inc., in January 1983 when Bernard C White (from Magnum Research) and Arnold Steinberg (Riga Arms Institute) applied patent for new handgun. What's interesting is that on the official MRI website, the name of White's is never mentioned.

ISRAELI PLOT

In 1985-1995 Desert Eagle pistol designed by Magnum Research were manufactured in state-owned Israel Military Industries company which was sub-contractor for US company. It is worth to mention here, that in 1985 IMI applied for a patent consisting of changes that were implemented during the production. In 1995 because of the changes in the Israeli company structure and ownership, the production was shifted to Saco Defence in Saco, Maine. In 1998 Magnum Research

once again contracted the production to Israel, but to now private-owned Israeli Weapon Industries. IWI produced Desert Eagles until 2009. All of the intellectual property, including patents, copyrights and trademarks always the property of Magnum Research.

The original name for the pistol was Magnum Eagle (or Eagle .357), but very quickly it was changed to more catchy Desert Eagle. Later on, this first production variant was name Mark I. The new pistol was chambered to .357 Magnum caliber, but company was constantly developing Desert Eagle and enhancing it. First change was polygonal barrel introduced in 1985 which has positive impact on the accuracy. In 1986 .44 Magnum variant debuted – Desert Eagle was first pistol for this ammunition. In 1987 the .41 Remington Magnum version was developed, but it was not popular so it was quickly discontinued. The improved Mark VII version was unveiled in 1989 and it featured adjustable two-stage trigger and enlarged safety switch and slide release levers. The Mark I and Mark VII were available with 6", 8", 10" and even 14" long barrels.

In 1991 the most powerful variant, .50 Action Express, is unveiled. Sometimes called "Desert Storm" became the first .50 cal pistol ever made. The .50 Action Express cartridge (12,7 mm x 33R) with maximum energy of 2200-2440J was developed by Evan Whildin from Action Arms in 1988. First company to manufacture this ammunition was IWI-owned Samson. Mark VII was produced through seven years until the current Desert Eagle Mark XIX became available. The main change and final improvement was a single frame size for all caliber variants what simplified manufacturing and also caliber conversion.



Basically, to change the caliber, user has to replace the barrel, bolt (they are manufactured in two sizes – for .357 and for .44 Magnum & .50 AE) and magazine.

BACK IN THE USA

Since 2009 the Desert Eagle Mark XIX pistols are manufactured exclusively in USA in MRI's own facility in Pillager, Minnesota, but because of stocks of IWI/IMI-made spare parts are available Magnum Research still can offer pistols that is assembled from Israeli components, those are available on request. Those versions are marked in the offer as DE44W and DE50W (only available in .44 Magnum and .50 AE). The parts between those made in USA and Israel are fully compatible and exchangeable. In 2010 Magnum Research was swallowed by Kahr Arms, manufacturer of handguns and, what is most known for, modern Thompson SMG replicas.

DESIGN

Magnum Research Desert Eagle Mark XIX is pretty complicated guns due the use of very powerful revolver ammunition. It's gas operated semi-automatic pistols. When a round is fired, gases are ported out through a small hole in the barrel near the breech. These travel forward through a small tube under the barrel, to a cylinder near the front of the barrel. The slide which acts as the bolt carrier has a small piston on the front that fits into this cylinder. When the gases reach the cylinder they push the piston rearward. The slide rides rearward on two rails on either side of the barrel, both with action springs around them,

with a large pin inside the camming surface in the rear of the bolt that causes the bolt to rotate and unlock. A cylindrical mechanism on the left side of the bolt, called the bolt stabilizer assembly, prevents the bolt from rotating freely as the slide moves, enabling it to align correctly with the barrel again as the slide moves it forward. The spring loaded ejector pin is continually being depressed by the case, until the case is free of the chamber and releases tension from the ejector, causing the case to fly out, becoming released from the extractor claw in the process. The slide reaches its rear-most travel, then rides forward again under tension of the springs around the slide rails, the bottom lug of the bolt pushes a new round into the chamber, then the bolt locks up and the gun can be fired again once the trigger is released.

Polygonal, changeable barrel is attached permanently and stays at the same place during shot what improves the accuracy. Trigger and firing mechanism is classy external hammer and two stage SA trigger.

On the steel slide there is short Picatinny rail for red dots or even small magnification optical sights. Straight from factory Desert Eagle comes with open-style iron sights that perfectly fits to the gun – massive, big and clear. Safety lever that immobilizes the firing pin and disconnects the trigger bar with the hammer catch is placed on the slide – it is ambidextrous. And, of course is huge. By looking at the safety lever shape we can tell whether it was produced in the USA or in Israel (second one will have distinctive claw)



Frame was also made from steel – grip is massive so people with small hands may encounter some troubles with getting firm grip. Slide release lever (enormously big, why not) is in the reach of large hands thumb and sometimes (especially when weapon is brand new) may require some force to release it. Way of profiling the grip, especially in the beaver-tail part reminds a little Colt M1911A1. Depending of country that produced it, the grip covers are exchangeable and are made from soft rubber (USA) or from hard plastic (Israel). Single stack magazines are made from steel and have flat floor plate. Depending on the caliber the magazine capacity varies: .357 Magnum holds 9 rounds, .44 Magnum holds 8 round and .50 Action Express is for 7 rounds.

MODELS

Desert Eagle Mark XIX is currently produced in three caliber versions: „classic“ .357 Magnum, .44 Magnum and .50 Action Express (through short time available was also option for .440 Cor-Bon) and with two barrel lengths – 6 inches and 10.75 inches. Frames are made from stainless steel, steel or aluminum alloy (lightweight version, L6 and L7).

In 2014 the Desert Eagle Stainless Steel was unveiled with 6 inch barrel with frame and slide made out from stainless steel and with extra Picatinny rail under the barrel and version with integrated muzzle break (barrel in that version has 5 inches but overall length of the handgun stays the same). Additionally pistols are now available in different finishing versions – natural stainless steel, chrome in two versions, black oxide; black

anodized, with Cerakote finish in graphite color, brown or worn out white, gold and version that are plated with 24-carat gold. In total of 40 combinations of caliber and finishes that you can choose from.

IN ACTION

Our friends from **Semper Fidelis** allowed us to play a bit with this monster. Just grabbing the pistol tells us that this is not just some fancy pistol but something from other world. This is just huge CANNON, that unloaded weights little under two kilograms! Add to that overall length that is over 27 centimeters and high of 16 centimeters (Glock 19 is just 1,5 cm longer than Desert Eagle is tall...).

We load the magazine. Enormous, why not. Looks little like magazines from TT or Colt 1911A1 – single stack, full steel and flat. Loading is not something complicated, you just have to remember about making adjustment for ammunition with rim that stick out. We put the weapon in our hands and here comes first problems. We write about the weight so here is about the rest.

Grip of the Desert Eagle is huge – people with small hand will have a problem with good grip. People with medium hand will encounter significant discomfort. Shooting will be for those with big hands (quite tolerably) and with very big hands (quite comfortable). Grip is quite dumpy, and at the same time just too wide.



Levers – huge. Placed ergonomically, but weight and size of the handgun makes the handling hard. You don't have big hands? Forget about releasing the magazine without changing the grip. You cannot band railroad track with your fingers? Pity, because you cannot release slide with thumb of your firing hand. Maybe you can take the safety off and that will be quite a success.

Reloading – and here is big surprise. There is no point to compare it to Glock but pulling the slide to the rear does not require inhuman power, at least that we can do...

Shooting – shock. FIRST one: trigger control. We expected something more like grenade launcher and it turn out that trigger works like in the custom Glock. Nice, smooth without unnecessary force. Recoil. Off course there is one. It does not break your hand, bend you elbow to the other side, does not kick handgun out of your hands but you can feel this cannon. You can fire from this monster without bad experience and what's more – you can to it accurately. We can get grouping like 12-15 centimeters from distance of 22-23 meters. Certainly if we train we can do better but we have to admit that Desert Eagle is pretty accurate and even easy to control while shooting. Easy enough that you can fire only with one hand and hit the target. Want some Max Payne or Lara Croft style shooting – you can fire two Desert Eagles at the same time and hit the target. In the figure but still.

What is surprising – turns out that this monster is very responsive for limp wrist effect. Maybe it was because weapon was brand new and completely not break-in, but it happened to be out of battery (2-3 mm). Simple push to the back and slide move forward properly.

Disassembling the weapon requires some practice, but is not over-complicated. We saw the instructional video on YouTube and work well.





CONCLUSION

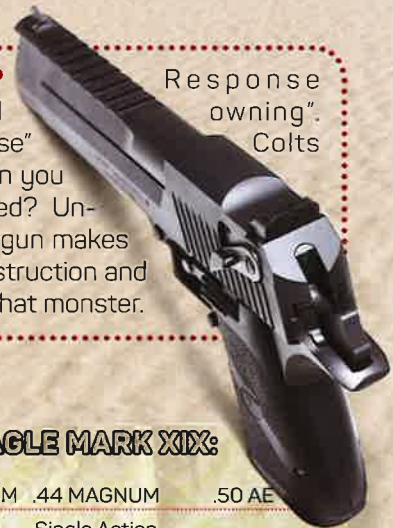
Despite enormous popularity in all kinds of action movies (in the need of one there were created shooting „blanks“, one made by Retay Eagle in 9mm PAK caliber and produced by Bruni Combat that fires 8mm PAK ammunition) and also video games where that powerful handgun that fires also powerful ammunition is weapon of main character as weapon for THE real man, truth is little different. It is a sport pistol for match... Using it for real combat purposes would be little nonsense. First of all – dimensions, secondly – powerful ammunition with huge recoil, loud bang and muzzle flash, thirdly small amount of ammunition in the magazine. Additionally, previous versions had problems with reliability. All those features decide that none of the military or police units will ever consider Desert Eagle as a service weapon, what is more – to what purposes? Currently, so wide spectrum of ammunition in more popular caliber as 9 mm Parabellum or .45 ACP is available, providing sufficient accuracy on short distances and at the same time in modern magazines will be more ammunition than in the Desert Eagle so its' use would lack of sense. In the armories of some special unit for example Polish GROM there are (or were) single units of that weapon, but rather as samples and nobody seemed to think of using them in **real combat operation**.

For protection? There are some crazy people who would like to carry that big block around with them but this is absolutely overkill. Big, heavy and unwieldy... It supposed to scary just by appearance ? Rather not...

Why you would need such a gun?

is simple – just for „having and owning“. There are people buying „Siamese“ so why not buy Desert Eagle when you can afford that and fell the need? Undoubtedly everything in that handgun makes big impression – look, weight, construction and effects that companies the firing that monster.

Response
owning”.
Colts



TECHNICAL DATA

MAGNUM RESEARCH DESERT EAGLE MARK XIX:

Caliber:	.357 MAGNUM	.44 MAGNUM	.50 AE
Trigger type	Single Action		
Overall length with barrel 6-cali (152 mm)	273 mm		
Overall length with barrel 10-cali (254 mm)	375 mm		
Height	159 mm		
Width	32 mm		
Trigger travel	70 mm		
Weight (w/empty magazine)	1998 g		
Barrel twist:	1:14 (355 mm)	1:18 (457 mm)	1:19 (483 mm)
Magazine Capacity:	9 rounds	8 rounds	7 rounds



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