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MR EAGLE

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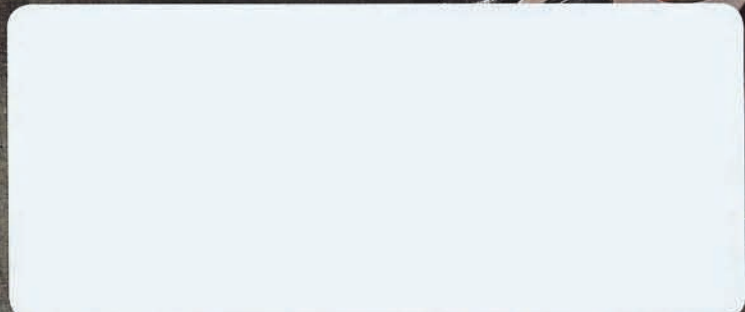
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MARCH 2011





"Mister Ea

There's a lot of misinformation out there about Magnum Research Inc.'s new Fast Action Eagle pistols. Our executive technical editor sets the record straight and puts two of the newest pistols to the test.

By Dick Metcalf, Executive Technical Editor

Magnum Research Inc. (MRI) of Minneapolis, Minnesota, the originator of the famed Desert Eagle magnum auto pistol, recently introduced a new high-quality series of 4-inch duty and defense "MR Eagle" semiautos in 9mm and .40 S&W. Featuring black polymer frames, natural-finish stainless slides, and distinctive double-action/single-action "Fast Action" striker-fired trigger mechanisms, these new guns are a completely different design from any previous MRI pistols.

Saying that may raise some confusion, however, due to the fact that when these guns were first released to the market last year and reviewed in other publications, they were called "Baby Desert Eagles" and were

so marked on the side of their slides and labeled as such in their instruction manuals. Magnum Research had used the Baby Desert Eagle name before, for an entirely different gun. Moreover, the term "Fast Action" itself has also been applied to other trigger mechanisms on previous auto pistols from other manufacturers, even though their mechanical operation is quite different.

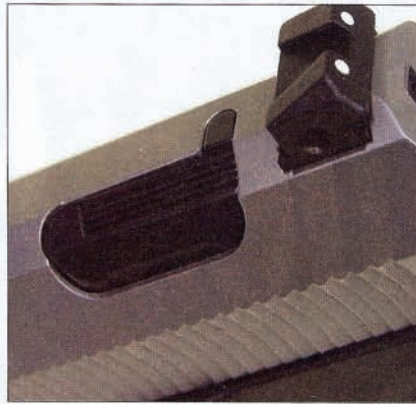
The result was that people seeking background information about the new MRI pistol under the Baby Eagle name discovered that their Internet searches or conversations with usually knowledgeable friends or gunshop owners yielded discussion about completely different guns with the same name from the same company. Not to mention descrip-

"Eagle" Flies High



PHOTO BY MIKE ANSCHUETZ

SPECIFICATIONS	
Model:	MR9 Eagle
Manufacturer:	Magnum Research Inc. 800-772-6168 www.magnumresearch.com
Type:	Recoil-operated, striker-fired autoloader
Caliber:	9mm Luger
Magazine Capacity:	15 rounds
Barrel:	4.0 in.; rifling: 6 grooves, 1:10 RH twist
Overall Length:	7.13 in.
Width:	1.28 in.
Height:	5.31 in.
Weight, empty:	24.8 oz. (without magazine)
Grips:	Integral to polymer frame with interchangeable backstraps
Finish:	Satin stainless slide, matte black polymer frame
Sights:	Windage-adjustable white-dot rear, white-dot front
Trigger:	8.5-lb. pull (DA), 4.5-lb. pull (SA); Fast Action, double action/single action
Safety:	Manual decocker button, self-engaging internal striker block, internal trigger safety
Price:	\$699



The decocker panel on the rear of the slide allows the MR Eagle pistols to safely switch from single-action to double-action mode.



The visible/tactile cocking indicator protrudes from the rear of the pistol when the striker is cocked in single-action mode.

SPECIFICATIONS	
Model:	MR40 Eagle
Manufacturer:	Magnum Research Inc. 800-772-6168 www.magnumresearch.com
Type:	Recoil-operated, striker-fired autoloader
Caliber:	.40 S&W
Magazine Capacity:	11 rounds
Barrel:	4.15 in.; rifling: 6 grooves, 1:16 RH twist
Overall Length:	7.28 in.
Width:	1.28 in.
Height:	5.31 in.
Weight, empty:	26.4 oz. (without magazine)
Grips:	Integral to polymer frame with interchangeable backstraps
Finish:	Satin stainless slide, matte black polymer frame
Sights:	Windage-adjustable white-dot rear, white-dot front
Trigger:	8.5-lb. pull (DA), 4.5-lb. pull (SA); Fast Action, double action/single action
Safety:	Manual decocker button, self-engaging internal striker block, internal trigger safety
Price:	\$699

tions of Fast Action trigger mechanisms that were nothing like the actions of the new MRI guns. So let's clear the fog at the outset and take a look at some background context before jumping into a review of the features and capabilities of these newest Magnum Research guns.

The Straight Story

The Baby Desert Eagle label was first applied by MRI to an all-steel double-action/single-action CZ75-variant semiautomatic pistol developed by Israel Weapon Industries (IWI). This gun was originally introduced to the U.S. market in 1990 by K.B.I. Inc. as the Jericho 941. Later, it was imported by O.F. Mossberg & Sons under the Uzi Eagle name and then by MRI as the Baby Desert Eagle until January 1, 2009, when for a variety of reasons

the import rights reverted to K.B.I./Charles Daly. Just over a year later on January 29, 2010, K.B.I./Charles Daly ceased business. During that intervening year, however, MRI had added the new polymer-frame striker-fired pistols reviewed here to its catalog and given them the Baby Desert Eagle name while referring owners of the previous IWI-made Baby Desert Eagles to K.B.I./Charles Daly for service and parts.

Finally, to top things off, in June 2010 Kahr Arms purchased Magnum Research Inc. (Minnesota) and incorporated a new company named Magnum Research Inc. (Delaware). Soon after, IWI approached the new Kahr Arms-owned Magnum Research, wondering if MRI would be interested in reacquiring the original Israeli-made Baby Desert Eagle for U.S. sale. Kahr thought that was

a good idea, but it already had the "new" Baby Desert Eagle in the MRI catalog. So it decided to take back the old Baby Desert Eagle under its original name and change the name of the new Baby Desert Eagle to MR Eagle (as in "Mister Eagle"). The resurrected MRI original Baby Desert Eagles were reintroduced at the 2011 SHOT Show, in three different chamberings (9mm, .40 S&W, and .45 ACP) with choice of steel or polymer frames and three different barrel lengths, for a total of 16 SKUs—plus four different new stainless-slide versions of the polymer-frame MR Eagle (the previous black-oxide-slide versions have been discontinued).

Got all that?

And there's still the Fast Action thing. The first gun with that label was a hammer-fired Fabrique



Nationale P35 "Hi-Power Fast Action" prototype developed in the 1970s for submission to the U.S. military pistol trials. After chambering a round, you could simply flick the hammer down, which would lower the firing pin retainer and cam the firing pin safely out of the way, leaving the hammer spring "cocked." Then, a few ounces of

pressure on the trigger would flip the hammer back fully rearward and return the firing pin to strike mode. Continuing the pull would fire the gun. It was not a double action; firing was always from single-action cocked mode. But you could carry it cocked and safe with the hammer down and fire without manually cocking it again.

Although the F.N. Hi-Power Fast Action didn't get beyond prototype stage, an offshoot variation of its hammer/trigger system was incorporated in the current Para USA Model 1911 LDA as well as the Fast-Action Korean Daewoo K5 pistol. The latter is the official military sidearm for the Republic of Korea Armed Forces and was briefly

SHOOTING THE MR EAGLES

Factory Load	Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation (fps)	25-Yard Accuracy (Inches)
9mm Luger MR9, 4.0-Inch Barrel			
Federal 105-gr. Low Recoil EFMJ	1230	19	3.00
Hornady 115-gr. Critical Defense	1123	25	2.37
Remington 124-gr. Golden Saber	1127	17	2.75
Speer 124-gr. Gold Dot +P	1218	27	3.25
Winchester 147-gr. STX	954	22	3.13
.40 S&W MR40, 4.15-Inch Barrel			
Federal 135-gr. Low Recoil HS-JHP	1198	18	2.68
Hornady 155-gr. TAP-FPD	1178	23	2.50
Remington 155-gr. JHP	1201	20	2.87
Winchester 165-gr. SXT	1127	14	3.00
Speer 180-gr. Gold Dot	1021	21	3.13

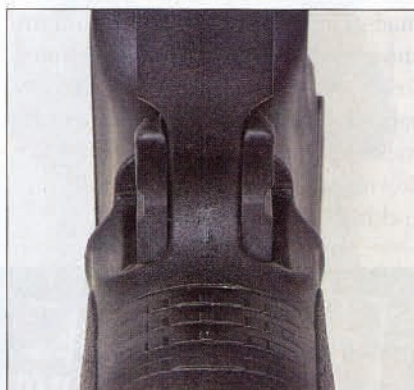
NOTES: Accuracy is the average of five, five-shot groups fired from a sandbag benchrest. Velocity is the average of five rounds measured 10 feet from the guns' muzzles.

imported commercially into the U.S. by Kimber in 9mm and .40 S&W chamberings.

The MR Eagle Fast Action

The Fast Action mechanism on the new MR Eagles is something else entirely. For one thing, it is striker fired; all other pistols called Fast Action are hammer fired. For another, more important thing, when the MR Eagles are decocked they revert to a true long-pull firm double-action first-shot trigger, with subsequent shots firing in short-pull single-action mode exactly as any conventional double-action/single-action auto pistol. Fast Action applies *only* if the striker is not decocked after an initial round is manually chambered prior to the first shot. And the MR Eagles have full double-action repeat-strike capability in case of a first-strike light primer indent.

When you cycle the slide and chamber a round on the MR Eagle, the striker is cocked, but the trigger remains in the full forward "double-action" position. Pulling the trigger at that juncture requires only a very light pressure of about 4 ounces to move it back approximately 0.85 inch to the "single-action" position, where an additional 1/8 inch, 4.5-pound stacking stroke will fire



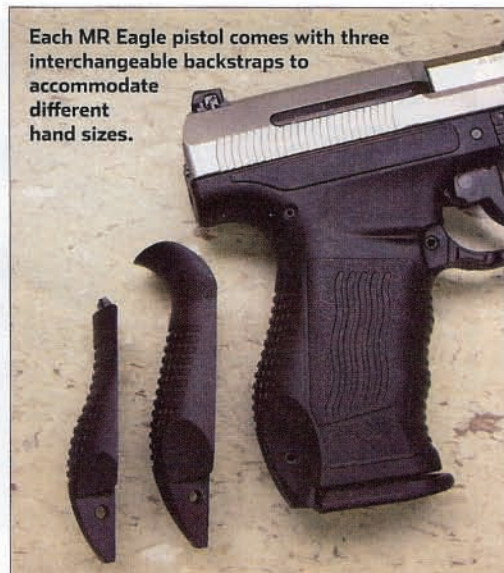
The ambidextrous magazine release operates with a downward push from the thumb or trigger finger of either hand.



The low-profile slide catch lever is shielded by the polymer frame to prevent accidental engagement or disengagement.

the gun. If you release the trigger without firing after the initial 4-ounce part of this "two-stage" takeup, it will remain in the rearward single-action position. For all subsequent shots after firing, the trigger returns to the 4.5-pound single-action position.

Each MR Eagle pistol comes with three interchangeable backstraps to accommodate different hand sizes.



This is the only fast action part of the design, which allows the first shot on an otherwise conventional double-action/single-action mechanism to have the same effective pull weight and stroke length as all subsequent shots. Otherwise, if you use the decocking button on the slide after chambering a round, or after firing, the pistol will revert to full double-action mode, requiring an 8.5-pound long-stroke first-shot pull, followed by 4.5-pound short-stroke shots. In case of a misfire, the mechanism likewise reverts to a conventional full double-action pull.

The thing to remember is that like a conventional hammer-fired DA/SA pistol, the MR Eagle is fully cocked after a round is chambered. Since the gun has no manual safety, the only way for secure safe carry when loaded is to use the decocker, which effectively turns the gun into a double action for the first shot. The Fast Action feature gives you more precision trigger control on the first shot, which could be a factor in an aimed-fire situation, but not so much in a desperate up-close-and-personal encounter. Also, the mechanism only requires about 0.25 inch rearward travel to reset the trigger from DA to SA mode, barely unlocking the breech, which you would likely have time to do in an aimed-fire situation anyway.

Plus, even when the striker is

cocked, the MR Eagle has two self-engaging safeties: a internal striker/firing pin drop plunger block and an internal trigger safety, which prevent discharge unless the trigger is pulled manually all the way to the rear. There is also a prominent visible/tactile cocking indicator that protrudes from the rear of the slide when the striker spring is loaded and a visible/tactile loaded chamber indicator at the rear of the heavy-duty extractor. However, there is *no* magazine disconnect safety, which means the gun is still capable of being fired without a magazine inserted. Ask any cop who ever had the magazine dislodged from his gun during a violent encounter how important he thinks *that* is.

The Fast Action system is more complicated to describe than to use, and it is remarkably intuitive to master in action. The first time I handled a Fast Action pistol fresh from the box, I thought it might be overly complicated, but it only took



The unobtrusive takedown latch above the trigger allows quick and easy disassembly.

about one full magazine to become automatically adept with its function and capabilities.

A User-Friendly Package

In addition to its Fast Action trigger mechanism, the entire MR Eagle package, in both 9mm and .40 S&W, is remarkably user-friendly and well thought out. The subtly finger-grooved grip features three easily interchangeable different-size backstrap panels to accommodate different-size user hands. The magazine release at the rear of

the trigger guard is ambidextrous, requiring a simple downward push from either the thumb or trigger finger of either hand. The decocking button is flush-fitted atop the left rear of the slide, easily accessible whether firing right- or left-handed. The low-profile slide lock release is protected by raised bosses molded in the frame. There is a four-slot milspec 1913 Picatinny equipment rail under the frame's front dust-cover. The polymer white-dot rear sight is click adjustable for windage, and the MR Eagles come with an assortment of polymer white-dot front sight blades in heights from 0.165 to 0.200 inch to accommodate different loads, each allowing about 5 inches of point of impact change at 25 yards (switching is easy with the included Allen wrench). The massive extractor and lowered ejection port contribute greatly to reliability.

MR Eagle disassembly is a breeze. Remove the magazine, make sure the chamber is clear, and depress

the decocker to release the striker (the slide won't come off if you don't decock it). Then hold the gun upright between your hands, muzzle pointing away, hook your thumbnails over the top opposite edges of the takedown stirrup, and press downward. You will feel a "click" as the takedown catch disengages, and the slide will move slightly forward. Then just simply pull the slide/barrel assembly forward from the frame and pluck the captive recoil spring guide assembly and barrel from the slide. The guide is polymer, it will flex. Reassembly is just as easy. Put the barrel and recoil spring guide back in the slide and slip the assembled slide back onto the frame. It will snap into place—no buttons to push or levers to operate.

While you've got the gun apart, take a look at its mechanisms. The underside of the slide is remarkably sleek and free of protrusions or interruptions, except for the self-engaging striker safety and the recessed decocker. Note the heavy-duty striker lug, another indicator of built-in durability and reliability. In the polymer frame, four small imbedded steel rails fully support the slide's operation while the barrel unlocks on a steel block pinned into the frame. The heavy-duty trigger arm lugs also point to the gun's strength, as does the integral steel ejector in the pinned-in steel fire-control assembly housing.

I fired both the MR9 Eagle and the MR40 Eagle with five loads each of different commercial personal-defense-grade ammunition of varied bullet weights and configurations. Zero malfunctions. There's a long-established standard for duty and defense pistols that calls for "four-point-five at twenty-five" in terms of maximum acceptable group size in inches at 25 yards. As the accompanying chart shows, both MR Eagles beat that standard hands-down from a sandbag benchrest with all loads. Velocities were right on spec for the barrel lengths.

Finally, it will be immediately



The sample MR Eagle pistols demonstrated consistent duty/defense-grade accuracy at 25 yards.

apparent to anyone familiar with the highly regarded Walther P99 pistol introduced in 1996 that the MR Eagles are virtually identical in design. No surprise. Walther manufactures the MR Eagle frames for MRI (which are clearly marked "Frame Made in Germany"), although the slides and barrels are made in the U.S. and all MR Eagle assembly and fitting is done at the MRI facility in Pillager, Minnesota. In fact, Frank Harris of Kahr Arms readily acknowledges that the main difference between the Walther P99 and the MR Eagles is: "We have a matte stainless slide and ship with two magazines, whereas the Walther P99 is shipped with one." He might also have noted that there are some subtle cosmetic and configuration differences in the molded polymer grip frame and trigger guard, that Walther does not use the term "Fast Action," and that the recommended retail price for the black-finish P99 is \$825 while the stainless MR Eagles are priced at \$699.

I like these Magnum Research MR Eagles in both calibers. A lot. They are a proven design—reliable, accurate, comfortable to handle and shoot—and can be readily tailored to their owner's individual hand size and ammunition preference. No matter what kind of Eagle they're called. **ST**

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