



TP45

Small



KP45

Smaller



Smallest

# The Kahr .45s

Best known for its modern semi-automatic pistols designed for discreet carry, Kahr Arms has increased the power available to armed citizens with its family of personal-size .45s.

BY WILEY CLAPP, Field Editor



Attacks on one's person seldom occur in the lives of most Americans—and that's a good thing. But attacks sometimes do occur. Unjustified personal attacks, and the loss of life and property that result—as well as all the attendant psychological and physical trauma—have many Americans concerned. Kahr Arms builds pistols specifically for such personal defense uses, and in the last year the firm has surpassed its previous models with two new .45 ACP pistols Americans have wanted. Add in an existing model, and you can now buy a new .45 ACP Kahr in three distinct, different sizes—all suited to concealed carry.

The three .45s are the TP45, KP45 and PM45. All follow the general pattern of previous guns in other calibers from the same New England maker. The new .45s bear a strong resemblance to the little 9 mm Kahr I first saw 15 years ago. That K9 was an all-steel pistol chambered in 9 mm Luger. It was well received but drew some criticism for being too heavy for a “pocket” gun.

Kahr engineers addressed this concern with a polymer receiver that sharply reduced the gun's weight. While Kahr still makes many all-steel models, its firearms with black polymer receivers are more popular. This company understands and fully accepts one of the guiding principles of concealed carry—if the gun is too heavy, it won't be habitually carried. As a corollary to that rule, understand that the day the gun isn't carried will be the day the gun is needed.

Weight may be very important in choosing a defensive pistol, but other matters must be considered, too. Size is important, as is simplicity of operation.

Also, factor in reliability in functioning and adequate power for the job. Kahrs are built to address these areas.

At this point, we need to take a quick look at the basic Kahr design before we go on to the trio of .45 ACP pistols. They all look very much alike and handle in the same way. The major differences involve size and weight due to caliber and intended mode of carry. There are a couple of sight options, including the excellent Novaks, but the lockwork of the most recent model is essentially the same as that first pistol of the 1990s.

Kahrs use a simple double-action-only (DAO) system of operation, where the same short, light trigger pressure through an arc performs the twin functions of fully cocking the striker and releasing it to fire. With such a system, it is safe to carry the pistol with a round in the chamber. And since there is no need for a manual safety, none is provided. Internal safeties help keep the gun from firing should it be dropped.

The operating drill is very simple and very similar to many of today's full-size service pistols. A sweeping pull of the trigger is all that is required—no intermediate pressure on a safety lever or other device. It is important to understand that slide movement is required to partially cock the striker, after which trigger pressure will complete cocking and fire the shot. The slide movement that happens when the shooter chambers an initial cartridge is enough. It works with the simplicity of a double-action revolver—just pull the trigger and it will fire.

All of the Kahr .45s have molded polymer receivers. The material is light and can be formed in a mold with a large degree of detail, such as the sharp check-



PM45



*The smallest of Kahr's small .45 ACP pistols is the PM45. The five-round-capacity pistol is the smallest .45 of its kind currently available. And, yes, it is a handful to shoot.*

ering on the front and back of the butt. The butt section also has the firm's logo on both sides. A serial number plate is permanently mounted in the dust cover area. Note that the sides of the receiver are particularly clean, with no take-down levers or safeties. There is a single slide lock on the left side.

Shaped to provide the shooter with a pocket for the web of his hand at the upper rear, the butt is compact but big enough to get a strong firing grip. A streamlined slide made of stainless steel rides atop the polymer receiver. The barrel and recoil spring are contained within the slide, as are the striker and striker spring. Slide contours include slide flats with cocking serrations at the rear, a flat top with sights dovetailed in place and a rounded transition between the two. The slide is beveled at the front edge to make re-holstering easier. There is a great deal of attention to

sound ergonomics in all of Kahr's compact pistols.

Kahr clearly intended to develop a light and compact series of pistols. It certainly succeeded, because the biggest Kahr pistol—the TP45—is substantially smaller than any other maker's pistol with the same caliber and capacity. In this sense, “smaller” is measured in three vectors—length, height and thickness. Kahr keeps its pistols thin with clever engineering and an offset feed ramp. Weight factors into the selection of a carry pistol, probably to a greater degree than size. A heavy pistol drags down the pockets of light clothing to the point where too many handgunners have rationalized away the need to carry the gun in the first place. As .45s go, you would be hard pressed to find a lighter pistol than a Kahr, at least one that can still be fired with relative ease.

As we go through the three .45s, we'll look at their size and weight

before going on to individual characteristics. The largest of the series, the TP45, measures 6.57" by 5.25" by 1.01" (length, height, thickness) and weighs 23.2 ozs. empty. It sports a rather long butt that takes a seven-round magazine that looks a great deal like that of the M1911, but they do not interchange. Although the TP45's barrel is a full 4" in length, it is slimmer and slightly shorter than the popular Commander-size guns. It is also several ounces lighter. The butt is long enough for my rather large hands to grasp and have room left over at the bottom. This is the biggest Kahr made and the “T” in the designation stands for “target,” which I cannot help but feel is a little optimistic. My sample came with the superb Novak sight with Tritium inserts for low-light shooting. That feature is very worthwhile for a defensive firearm. The TP45 is a fine gun that is a little big for concealed carry for anyone other than big guys.



Take away a half-inch in barrel length and shorten the magazine by one round, and you have the original KP45 introduced in 2006. This is a smaller gun (6.30" by 4.80" by 1.01"), weighing 20.5 ozs. empty. By any other standard, the KP45 would be a small .45, but it is a mid-size on Kahr's scale. We have needed a modern .45 pistol of this size for many years, so I welcomed the gun enthusiastically. The barrel is 3.5" long and the magazine capacity is six-plus-one rounds. In my hands, there is just enough room for all three lower fingers to get firmly around the checkered frontstrap. If you want a very compact .45 pistol, this is an excellent buy. My sample came with sights featuring a white dot on the front and a white square just below the notch on the rear. The sight picture is good. Also, the sights are securely dovetailed into the slide. This is the only sensible way to mount sights on a rough-usage pistol.

The PM45, the smallest of the series, follows the styling of the company's ultra-successful PM9. The PM45 is more compact than the previously discussed .45s—5.67" by 4.49" by 1.01"—and weighs 19.3 ozs. This is the smallest, lightest .45 ACP pistol that I can think of. In my biggish hand, the PM45 fits almost completely, but my little finger actually rests on the front edge of the magazine floorplate. It is enough to control the recoil, but is somewhat uncomfortable. The same sight options are available. As was the case with the size reduction on the other gun, developing the ultra-small PM45 costs you another round in the magazine—it is a five-plus-one.

There is an important admonition in Kahr's manuals that advises the buyer to fire 200 rounds through a new pistol before putting it into service as a defensive handgun. This is a break-in period for the pistol, and Kahr is being coldly realistic in this advice. I would further advise the new Kahr buyer to be sure a new pistol is fully lubricated before he or she starts burning powder. Face

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## KAHR ARMS .45 ACPs

	TP45	KP45	PM45
<b>MANUFACTURER</b>	KAHR ARMS (DEPT. AR), 130 GODDARD MEMORIAL DRIVE, WORCESTER, MA 01603; (508) 795-3919; WWW.KAHR.COM		
<b>CALIBER</b>	.45 ACP		
<b>ACTION TYPE</b>	RECOIL-OPERATED, SEMI-AUTOMATIC CENTER-FIRE PISTOL		
<b>FRAME</b>	MOLDED POLYMER WITH EMBEDDED INSERTS		
<b>SLIDE</b>	STAINLESS STEEL		
<b>BARREL</b>	4.04"	3.54"	3.14"
<b>RIFLING</b>	1:16" RH TWIST, POLYGONAL		
<b>MAGAZINE CAPACITY</b>	SEVEN	SIX	FIVE
<b>SIGHTS</b>	DRIFT-ADJUSTABLE FRONT AND REAR, BAR AND DOT HIGHLIGHTS		
<b>TRIGGER PULL</b>	DAO, 7 LBS., 12 OZS.	DAO, 7 LBS., 11 OZS.	DAO, 7 LBS, 10 OZS.
<b>OVERALL LENGTH</b>	6.57"	6.3"	5.67"
<b>WIDTH</b>	1.01"		
<b>HEIGHT</b>	5.25"	4.8"	4.48"
<b>WEIGHT</b>	23.2 OZS.	20.5 OZS.	19.3 OZS.
<b>ACCESSORIES</b>	LOCKABLE HARD CASE, MANUAL, LOCK, TWO MAGAZINES		
<b>SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE</b>	\$697	\$783	\$814

## SHOOTING RESULTS (25 YDS.)

<b>.45 ACP CARTRIDGE</b>	<b>VEL. @ 12' (F.P.S.)</b>	<b>ENERGY (FT.-LBS.)</b>	<b>GROUP SIZE IN INCHES</b> <b>SMALLEST    LARGEST    AVERAGE</b>		
<b>KAHR TP45, 4.04" BARREL</b>					
<b>HORNADY No. 9097 230-GR. E-FMJ</b>	801 Avg. 22 Sd	328	2.95	4.90	3.66
<b>FEDERAL No. GM45A 230-GR. GM FMJ</b>	753 Avg. 15 Sd	290	1.74	2.06	1.90
<b>AVERAGE EXTREME SPREAD</b>					2.78
<b>KAHR KP45, 3.54" BARREL</b>					
<b>HORNADY No. 91128 200-GR. TAP-FPD JHP</b>	932 Avg. 29 Sd	385	2.28	4.63	3.19
<b>FEDERAL No. GM45A 230-GR. GM FMJ</b>	775 Avg. 17 Sd	306	2.59	3.07	2.79
<b>AVERAGE EXTREME SPREAD</b>					2.99
<b>KAHR PM45, 3.14" BARREL</b>					
<b>HORNADY No. 9097 230-GR. E-FMJ</b>	786 Avg. 20 Sd	316	1.85	3.47	3.13
<b>FEDERAL No. P45HS1 230-GR. HYDRA-SHOK JHP</b>	799 Avg. 30 Sd	326	2.90	3.96	3.39
<b>AVERAGE EXTREME SPREAD</b>					3.26
NOTES: ACCURACY RESULTS BASED ON FIVE CONSECUTIVE, FIVE-SHOT GROUPS FIRED WITH THE PISTOLS BENCHED ON A REST AND TARGETS PLACED AT 25 YDS. VELOCITIES MEASURED WITH AN OEHLER MODEL 35P WITH SCREENS PLACED 12 FT. FROM THE MUZZLE. AVERAGE AMBIENT TEMPERATURE 46° F. ABBREVIATIONS: E-FMJ (ENCAPSULATED FULL METAL JACKET), FMJ (FULL METAL JACKET), GM (GOLD MEDAL), JHP (JACKETED HOLLOW POINT), TAP-FPD (TACTICAL APPLICATION POLICE FOR PERSONAL DEFENSE), Sd (STANDARD DEVIATION).					

it; Kahr is crowding the envelope when a gun of this power is reduced to almost quarter size. There was a certain amount of feeding balkiness and, yes, that means I had a few malfunctions. Usually they were failures to feed or chamber.

I shot the guns from a bench rest in the *American Rifleman* protocol—five consecutive, five-shot groups at 25 yds. with each load. Although that is a greater distance than any of these defensive pistols are ever likely to be fired, that is the yardstick we use. I was more than happy with the results, where even the little 3" PM45 shot clusters not much larger than 3.5" average, and a few isolated groups were below 2". Suffice it to say that Kahr .45 accuracy is excellent. But there is a final note that we need to look at—recoil.

As you descend the scale in Kahr .45 pistol size—TP45 to KP45 to PM45—the recoil, muzzle flip and muzzle blast grow from Spartan to sharp to severe. The little PM45 weighs just about a pound and a quarter; there's not much there to soak up recoil, and there is very little to hang onto while firing. Shoot a round of 230-gr. ball at 800-plus f.p.s., and the gun is going to move. There is only one way to get anything done, and that is to grab the pistol with the tightest grip you can possibly manage, lock your wrist and hang on. If you don't, the gun will sometimes malfunction. I put almost 150 rounds through the littlest Kahr .45 before the bumps smoothed out, and I was able to get a respectable group on the silhouette with no malfunctions. This pistol crowds the performance envelope very hard, and the others do the same thing to a lesser degree. I am not attempting to warn any prospective buyer away from a Kahr, but I would hope everyone understands that there are difficulties associated with using it.

These .45 pistols are what Kahr Arms fans wanted, and the company has produced them. I consider them to be very valuable additions to the concealed-carry handgun scene. ■