John M. Browning's .45 ACP-cal. Model of 1911 established an unprecedented place in history as both the official U.S. service pistol for nearly three-quarters of a century and as a seminal design that has been the basis for innumerable spinoffs.

The final report of the military selection board that convened in 1906-1907 for the purpose of choosing a new U.S.-issue service pistol remarked on the Colt-made Browning design and of its long survival after testing, a glowing entry: "Of the two pistols, the board was of the opinion that the Colt is superior, because it is more reliable, more enduring, more easily disassembled when there are broken parts to be replaced, and the more accurate." Since then, the ".45" and its descendants have achieved a worldwide reputation for serviceability unsurpassed by any other handgun.

The Model of 1911 was updated during the early 1920s with several minor changes designed to improve handling qualities. They included frame scallops near the trigger, an arched mainspring housing, shorter barrel, less parallax-type sights, shorter trigger and longer grip safety. These improved models were designated the U.S. Model 1911A1 and was adopted in 1924, popular, modern-day variations of the basic Browning-Colt design have led to both small-frame, as well as semiautomatic models.

The accompanying disassembly instructions are for basic U.S. Model 1911A1-type pistols, but should prove helpful with the disassembly of other M1911-based pistols. Be aware that additional steps are required for Colt Series 70, 80, and 90-series pistols and that specialized parts and features found on these pistols require specific tools and knowledge not covered here.

**DISASSEMBLY**

To ensure that the pistol is unloaded, point the muzzle in a safe direction then remove the magazine and retractor the slide. Visually inspect the chamber to confirm it is empty.

1. Start by releasing the side plate on a table so both hands may be used. With the thumb, press inward on the knurled end of the recoil spring plug (30) while at the same time rotating the barrel bushing (2) one-quarter turn clockwise to free the plug and recoil spring (35) assembly (Fig. 1). Next, withdraw the plug and recoil spring (Fig. 2) from the slide (42). If the spring does not come free easily, rotate the plug in the counter-clockwise direction to separate it from the spring. Rotate the barrel bushing counter-clockwise until it is disengaged from the slide and remove it.

2. Pull the slide (42) rearward until the small clearance notch is aligned with the slide stop lug (43). Push the slide stop right to the left, and pull it out of the frame (Fig. 3). Pull the frame to the rear and off of the slide. The recoil spring guide (36) may then be lifted off the slide. Push the barrel link (3) forward and slide the barrel (10), link (3) and link pin (4) out of the slide's front.

3. With the hammer cocked, rotate the safety lock (37) rearward to the "on" position. It may now be pulled to the left and away from frame (Fig. 4). Next, remove the hammer pin (15) from the frame (Fig. 5). Then, lift out the hammer assembly (Fig. 6), which includes the hammer (14), hammer strut (16) and hammer strut pin (17). Using the hammer strut as a punch, drift out the mainspring housing pin (26) (Fig. 7). Slide the mainspring housing (27) downward and off the frame. (Fig. 8). The grip safety (13) may now be lifted out. Next, lift out the rear spring (41) clockwise using the lip of the rear spring as a screwdriver. The catch assembly may then be lifted out of the frame. Remove the trigger (49) through the rear of the frame.

4. Using the tail of the hammer strut, push out the barrel link pin, freeing the link from the barrel. Using the hammer strut, press the firing pin (9) out of the slide (11) downward. This frees the stop for removal and off of the slide. The firing pin may now be pulled out and separated from its spring (10). With the hammer strut, pry out and remove the extractor (8) rearward and out of the back of the slide. Reassemble in the reverse order.

Remember that all of the above instructions may not be applicable to Model IV Series 70 and newer Colts, which feature a collet-type barrel bushing and include several additional components related to the firing pin safety.