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BLANK ATTACHMENT

I have heard of a 'blank firing attachment', which apparently is intended for firing blank ammunition in automatic guns. Just how does such a device work?—I.T.R.

Answer: Blank ammunition does not have the power to operate automatic guns without assistance. Blank firing attachments make it possible for blank ammunition to function the automatic breech mechanism. In gas-operated guns, the attachment merely narrows the muzzle sufficiently to develop operating pressure within the bore. In recoil-operated weapons the problem is more difficult but is solved by attaching the device to the full-length barrel jacket at the muzzle so that it applies an extra gas force to the breech and muzzle faces, pushing the barrel back and reproducing the recoil action.

Blank firing attachments have long been used on machine guns. An attachment was developed for the M1 rifle after the end of World War II, but it was then decided that it was not needed.



Blank firing attachment M12 in place on muzzle of M14 rifle

Later the requirement was re-established, and blank firing attachments have been developed for both the M14 rifle and the M60 machine gun. Since these are both gas-operated weapons, the devices are comparatively simple.

The blank firing attachment for the M14 rifle is simply a long stem passing through the flash suppressor and entering the barrel a short distance. A small hole through the length of this stem permits the powder gas from the blank cartridge to escape, but with enough delay to build up operating pressure in the bore.



Breech Shield M3 (see arrow) attached to action of M14 rifle

The stem is held in place by a simple sheet metal strap to the bayonet stud as shown. One advantage of this construction is simplicity and cheapness. Another and more important reason for it is to minimize danger and damage from the inadvertent firing of a ball cartridge with the attachment in place. If that is done, the attachment is carried away and with it a

part of the flash suppressor, but the rest of the rifle is not damaged and there is a minimum of fragments that could possibly endanger personnel.

The breech shield illustrated is readily snapped on to the breech by hand. It guards against possible injury to the firer if, after long firing of blank ammunition, some unburned powder grains collected in the breech mechanism should ignite with a flash. The breech shield does not interfere with the firing and ejection of either ball or blank ammunition. It does interfere with clip loading the rifle, so is not ordinarily used except when firing blank ammunition.—E.H.H.

CARBIDE DIE

I do quite a bit of pistol shooting and reload my own ammunition. I considered purchasing carbide-lined case-resizing dies, but have not done so in view of their much greater cost in comparison with ordinary steel dies. I can appreciate the fact that the carbide die will have a longer life, but I can still buy several of the steel dies at a total cost of little more than that of the carbide die. Are they worth their extra cost?—T.R.O.

Answer: Carbide-lined dies will outlast several of the ordinary steel dies, but that fact is not too important except to individuals reloading extremely large quantities of ammunition.

The steel resizing die of good quality will process a great many cases before it becomes so badly worn that it must be discarded. However, the carbide die has some definite advantages in use which are perhaps more significant than the matter of durability alone. One important advantage is that the cartridge cases do not have to be lubricated prior to resizing. This eliminates an onerous chore which must precede sizing of cases in the steel die, and there is no necessity for degreasing the loaded cartridges before use. Much less effort is required to force a case into the carbide die than into the steel die. This can be an important factor where the reloading press has only nominal mechanical advantage, or in semi-automatic reloading tools where several operations are done simultaneously with each stroke of the operating handle. In short, the use of a carbide die is much less fatiguing.

Cases resized in the carbide die are given a surface polish or burnished finish which is noticeably free from the die scratches and abrasions usually found on cases resized with steel dies. This is particularly true of nickel-plated cases, which are inclined to gall in steel sizing dies which have seen some use.

Many users of carbide dies do not pre-clean fired cases to remove grit or abrasive powder fouling prior to resizing. This must be done prior to resizing cases with steel dies, or the dies will soon become badly scratched which will in turn detract from the appearance of cases processed in them. However, the carbide insert, although very hard, will also become scratched by grit particles, but to a lesser degree. For that reason it would be advisable to pre-clean noticeably dirty cases prior to resizing them with the carbide die.—M.D.W.