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Q&A

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M14 Gas Cylinder

Q I have an M14-type semi-auto rifle with a loose gas cylinder. I followed the gas system assembly procedure in the U.S. military technical manual, but the problem persists. One person told me to "peen" the cylinder and another said I need a thicker gas cylinder lock. What is the answer?

A While issue M14 rifles are pretty much left as is, part of the procedure to ready rifles for match status is to align and tighten the gas cylinder. The party who advised you to "peen" the cylinder was almost right. Peening should be done to the barrel, not the gas cylinder. The upper spline's corners are peened inward along its entire length with the use of a light hammer and flat-faced punch. The key is to peen both sides evenly so as to keep the cylinder in alignment. Some discretion must be applied; you don't want to overdo it, but with a match-grade rifle, it should require a block of wood and a plastic hammer to seat the cylinder. That is just one step in the unitizing, stabilizing and alignment of the gas cylinder for match accuracy. Done alone, it probably won't have that much effect.—JOHN TREAKLE

It's A "Paradox"

Q I have an interesting brass-case, 12-ga. shotgun shell with an impressive looking brass projectile that makes it look like a small artillery shell. The projectile does not seem to be very heavy, although I have not tried to disassemble it. My copy of Cartridges of the World does not have anything on it. I hope it is not filled with explosives! Can you help identify this cartridge?



A The cartridge you ask about is known as a "paradox." This type of cartridge was used in special shotguns, double barreled, with a few inches of rifling at the muzzle. The ammunition was designed to kill very big game—up to and even including elephants. I have never heard of any paradox cartridges with an explosive charge in the bullet—but anything was, and is, possible.—Dave Andrews

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