

## MITCHELL'S LITTLE DARLING

### The M63 "Tanker" Mauser.



*Compact and perfectly balanced, the Tanker would be right at home in the deer woods.*

**A**mong the many existing Mauser variants, possibly one of the most universally appealing is the petite police carbine. The little gun just exudes character. It begs to be handled, so when I saw what appeared to be a brand new police carbine in 8x57mm on Mitchell's Mausers Web site, I had to have one.

Mitchell's Mausers calls theirs the Model 63 "Tanker" Mauser and explains that the Yugoslavians originally designed and produced the model for their armored units. OK, but it's a spitting image of a Mauser police carbine. In fact, except for the caliber, it's the image of the earlier Yugoslavian Model 24 carbine purchased from FN to arm local gendarmerie units. The new "Tanker" is being produced by the Zastava factory in Serbia.

You've undoubtedly seen the Mitchell's Mausers ads for stunning, unissued M48 Yugoslavian Mauser rifles. The man behind Mitchell's Mausers is Don Mitchell, whose family roots go far back into Serbia and Montenegro. Fluent in Serbian, Mitchell has been able to collaborate with the Zastava factory like no one before. The development and importation of the M63 Tanker is evidence of just how well the working relationship is going. Indeed, Mitchell now spends several

months a year working with Zastava on new product development.

If "Zastava" sounds faintly familiar, then you may remember the Mark X Mauser sporting rifles produced at Zastava and imported by Interarms. Interarms was owned by the well-known international weapons dealer, Sam Cummings, who was buying Enfields for \$1.50 from the British government in the 1950s. In fact, we can thank Cummings for the great surplus bargains we enjoyed throughout 1950s and 1960s. He owned the market.

The Zastava factory is located in the town of Kragujevac, which is in the middle of Serbia, just south of Belgrade. During WWII, the Germans invaded Yugoslavia in 1941. It was paramilitary units like Marshall Tito's that resisted the Nazis and, after the end of the war, the Yugoslavians under Tito steered a uniquely independent course between the West and the Warsaw Pact countries. They also developed an independent arms industry.

#### **New Mausers**

When Zastava ceased the manufacture of M48 Mausers, they began making high quality AK-47s. Now the factory is retooling once again to produce models like the Tanker to stimulate non-military

sales. Don Mitchell playfully hints at the possibility we will soon see a new tactical rifle and maybe even a Mark X-like sporting rifle, so stay tuned.

The M63 Tanker action is a faithful copy of the 1898 military Mauser. It's made of real machined steel and incorporates the mechanical features that have kept the Model 98 at the head of the class for 107 years such as controlled round feed, (to eliminate double charging) and a positive, non-rotating extractor. The solid, inner-collar breeching strengthens the receiver, encircles the bolt head and minimizes cartridge head protrusion. A three-position, direct-acting safety and an interlocking relationship of parts prevents the firing pin from falling if the bolt isn't fully locked. Topping it off is a combined bolt stop and mechanical ejector, unobtrusive safety lug, outstanding gas handling characteristics and a rugged, staggered-round box magazine.

The Tanker is a short, little runt. The M63 barrel is 17.4" long compared to the 24" tube of the standard 98K. When you compare the models side-by-side, what's been done to produce the M63 look is to shorten the forearm and move the front band and bayonet lug back proportionally. The overall length of the M63 is 37" compared to the 43.5" OAL

of the M48. In fact, the M63 is within millimeters of the OAL of Winchester's Model 94 carbine.

This 7.4-pound little baby is handy. Not only is it compact, but its neutral balance point is right under the front receiver ring. You can just wrap your hand around it at that point and head for the hills. Don Mitchell remarked that the M63 would be a great carbine for the deer woods. As far as milsurps and calibers go, it would be ideal.

The light, almost blond-colored stock of the M63 is distinctive. I asked Mitchell about the wood since it looked a lot like birch. Mitchell said it was a variation of teak. The wood is fine-grained, dense and, because of its natural color, sets off the blued parts nicely.

Yes, all the metal is well polished and deeply blued. The buttplate caught my eye. It's corrugated. I've seen a similar design on FN contract Mausers.

The sights are typical Mauser — an inverted V front and a tangent rear. The rear tangent is graduated from 200 to 1,400 meters. OK, 200 meters is a good battle zero, but why on a carbine oriented toward the civilian market to be shot at targets ranging from 25 to maybe 200 meters? It would make more sense if the rear sight were graduated from 50 meters to 500 meters in 50-meter increments. Scoping is an option to consider and Mitchell can furnish a mount that replaces the rear sight leaf, providing a scout rifle-type forward scope placement.

The trigger is a standard double-stage military design. Measured on a Lyman digital scale, the Tanker trigger broke cleanly at 7.3 pounds. As an option, Mitchell's offers an adjustable, single stage replacement unit.

## Ammo

Mitchell's Mausers is also importing a line of "premium" grade 8x57mm ammunition made by Prvi Partizan in Serbia. The firm is marketing four different 8x57 Prvi Partizan loads under the Mitchell brand label including a 175-grain PSP BT, a 175-grain HPBT a 198-grain FMJ and a 198-grain FMJ

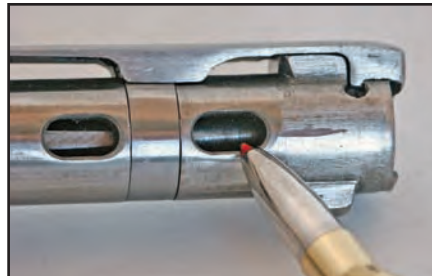


*Compared to a regular 98K (left), the Tanker exhibits the handling qualities of the Winchester Model 94 carbine.*

*A 200-meter zero! The Tanker needs a rear sight calibrated for real world shooting distances. Say, 50 to 500 meters in 50-meter increments.*



*The 1898 Mauser is an inspired design, protecting the shooter from gas leakage by its classic bolt shroud (above) and bolt ports (below).*



*Made by Prvi Partizan, Mitchell's Premium ammunition proved to be exceptionally accurate in the M63.*



*Holt thought this receiver ring graffiti was a bit much. (See new update on last page.)*

SWAT. I shot all four loads in the M63 for accuracy and velocity side-by-side with a 1941 Portuguese contract Oberndorf Mauser K98 for comparison.

The average velocity of all four loads in the M63 was 2,331 fps over a PACT Professional Chronograph. In the K98, it was 2,468 fps. In general, you lose an average 137 fps out of the shorter 17.4" barrel, which is insignificant.

In spite of its short sight radius, the little carbine turned in an exceptionally strong performance with Mitchell's ammunition. At 50 yards, all four loads hovered around an inch. At 100 yards, the 175-grain PSP BT and the 198-grain FMJ clustered into 1½" while the 198-grain SWAT and 175-grain FMJ HPBT averaged 1¼".

I was surprised that the standard soft-point hunting load and 198-grain FMJ load outperformed the SWAT and 175-grain hollowpoint ammunition, but they did, and did so consistently. In fact, the 50-yard groups shot with the 198-grain FMJ load averaged ¾". On the other hand, the K98 favored the 175-grain HP, 198-grain SWAT, 175-grain PSP, and 198-grain FMJ in that order.

## Recoil?

I imagine if fired at night, the little fire-breathing dragon would light up the sky, but recoil is not bad at all. Really the only difference between the Tanker and a regu-

M63 TANKER	
Maker: Zastava Kragujevac, Serbia	
Importer: Mitchell's Mausers PO Box 9295, Fountain Valley, CA 92728 (800) 274-4124, www.mitchellsales.com	
<b>ACTION TYPE:</b>	Controlled feed bolt action
<b>CALIBER:</b>	8x57mm
<b>CAPACITY:</b>	5
<b>BARREL LENGTH:</b>	17.4"
<b>OVERALL LENGTH:</b>	37"
<b>WEIGHT:</b>	7.4 pounds
<b>FINISH:</b>	Blue
<b>SIGHTS:</b>	V-notch adjustable rear, inverted V front
<b>STOCK:</b>	Hardwood
<b>PRICE:</b>	\$495

lar 98K Mauser is the lack of 6.6" of a slim barrel and a bit of wood. The M63 still weighs approximately 7.4 pounds plus the 8x57 is a conservative round. The 198-grain loads are churning up only 2,280 fps in the shorter barrel while the 175-grain ammunition is pushing 2,400 fps. I've owned two FN police carbines, and one of the most accurate and pleasant shooting loads in the little guns was the 125-grain Hornady bullet pushed along by 50 grains of IMR 4895.


While the Tanker proved accurate, its 200-yard battle sight was no blessing. As might be expected, the carbine shot high. At 100 yards, the high-velocity 175-grain

loads were the worst offenders with the PSP plunking in 8½" high and the FMJ HP, 12" high. Both 198-grain loads were 3" high, which is not a bad hunting zero, but Mitchell's 198-grain loads are based on FMJ bullets, a no-no in most state big-game regulations.

The notch of the rear sight is already right down at wood level so it cannot be filed deeper. The easiest solution would be to replace the front sight with a higher one. Brownells stocks a high Mauser front sight blank (Catalog No. 078-050-000) designed with this exact problem in mind.

The other alternative would be a scout-type scope arrangement. In my opinion, scoping the Tanker would destroy its racy, little lines and adversely affect its innate handiness.

I haven't seen actual surplus Mauser police carbines in the pipeline for years, and my hunch is we won't see anymore anytime soon. There just weren't that many ever produced. You might stumble upon a Netherlands FN Model 1948 carbine, an Iranian Model 49 carbine, a Persian Czech Model 30 carbine, a Venezuelan FN Model 24/30 carbine, or even a Yugoslavian FN Model 24 carbine at the next gun show, but don't count on it.

In the meantime, Mitchell's new M63 Tanker is filling this unique niche, and it's proved to be an exceptionally fine and attractive little Mauser. 

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## New Production Rifles since This Story was Written:

### Original Serb Crest

All new-production M63 Tanker Mausers now display the traditional national crest of the country of Serbia, where the rifle is manufactured.

Crisply stamped on the front receiver



ring, this crest enhances the Mauser's natural beauty.

The Tanker Mauser reviewed by Holt Bodinson carried older receiver markings, quite unlike the new ones.

### Multiple Calibers

Now that the Tanker Mauser is available in multiple calibers, we are receiving inquiries about using different kinds of ammunition.

The Tanker Mauser uses a full-sized, full-strength Mauser action that is capable of handling any new-production, correct-caliber ammunition manufactured to SAAMI specifications. (Do not use reloaded ammunition.) However, if you select bullets that are heavier or lighter than standard, your zero aim point may change

Most shooters simply apply "Kentucky Windage" to compensate. However, if you choose to re-adjust the front sight to match your favorite non-standard ammo (although we would generally recommend that you not change it), we can provide you with the simplest solution.

For complete details, just call us.

### Big Price Increase is Here

Tanker Mausers produced at the old price of \$495 are currently available to you in calibers .30-06 and .243 Win.

**When these are gone, there will be no more Tanker Mausers at this low price.**

After six years, inflation is finally forcing us to raise prices

**Last Tanker Mausers at Only \$495.**

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**800-274-4124**

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Get Yours at the Old Price**

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