

.380 AS THE RODNEY DANGERFIELD OF CALIBERS

by Tom Glaser



Figure 1. Fabrique Nationale Model 1910, the same model used in the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie in Sarajevo in 1914 (left). An example of a Yugoslavia FN1922 with a larger magazine (right).

Some countries which ban military calibers allow .380s because of their ignorance of history. The .380 ACP/9mm kurz/9mm corto/9mm court/9mm kratki (all different names for the same caliber, the 9mm x17mm/.380 Automatic Colt Pistol) has a long and varied military history. It was designed by John Moses Browning, in conjunction with Winchester, to be used in the Browning designed Colt Model 1908, an expansion of the Model 1903. It was the same length as the .32 ACP and focused on the military market, as his 9mm Browning Long had been. It was designed to be fired from an unlocked breech pistol, which made manufacturing simpler and cheaper, had less recoil than larger 9mm calibers, such as the Luger cartridge, and was adaptable to smaller pistols.

Fabrique Nationale

I am only aware of one caliber that has started a world war – the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie in Sarajevo in 1914 when Gavrilo Prinzip used a Fabrique Nationale Model 1910 designed by John Moses Browning. The pistol illustrated in Figure 1 (left) was made exactly 1,000 serial numbers before the one he used – which is now on display in the Heeresgeschichtliches Museum in Vienna.¹ Fabrique Nationale also made the Model 1922, which was designed specifically for

Yugoslavia, or the Kingdom of the Slavs. They liked the FN Model 1910, but they wanted a larger magazine capacity and a longer barrel (see Figure 1, right). The M-1910 was so modified. Most pistols were marked in Cyrillic “State Army” and were issued to NCOs. Other pistols were marked “Officer” in Cyrillic. The Yugoslavian Navy also used the Model 1922. These are marked on the top of the slide, right under the Yugoslavian crest (this crest is found on all Yugoslavian models).²

In 1939, Turkey ordered 3,000 FN Model 1922 pistols (Figure 2, left) from Fabrique Nationale marked T.C. Subay (Turkiye Cumhuriyeti Subay) “Officer of the Republic of Turkey.” Supposedly, these were intercepted by the Nazis before shipment and issued to German troops. However, they do not have *WaffenAmt* stamps.³ The conquest of Belgium by the Germans in World War II resulted in the capture of the Fabrique Nationale factory in Liege and they began producing the Model 1922 for themselves, both in .32 and .380. The 9mm kurz version was termed the P-641(b) for *Belgique*. These were largely used by the *Luftwaffe*.⁴ The Dutch had also been extensive users of the FN M-1922, and some very few were captured in the factory. These were *WaffenAmt* stamped and issued. Holland/The Netherlands adopted the FN Model 1922 in 1925, and designated it as the Model 25 (Figure 2, right). The



Figure 2. An example of a Turkish FN Model 1922 (left) and Dutch FN M-1922 they designated as their Model 25 (right).

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Figure 3. An example of a Netherlands Queen Juliana Model 125 with and without a lanyard loop.



Figure 4. Greek Army marking with ΕΣ (the letters epsilon sigma) on the slide of a marked FN M-1922 pistol (left). An example of a Greek Air Force issued FN M-1922 pistol that was presented to U.S. COL Papas (right).

were used through Dutch colonies as well as the military and law enforcement and were distinguished by the W crest of Queen Wilhelmina on the top of the slide.⁵

The FN 1922 could not be imported into the U.S. because of the Gun Control Act of 1968 (GCA '68), so FN/Browning altered the model to meet the points (Figure 3). With added adjustable sights, and thumb rest grips on the Browning model, FN called this the Model 125 and put on the crest of Queen Juliana. Some did not have lanyard loops, while some others did.⁶

Greece purchased approximately 9,980 FN M-1922 in 1926. These are marked with the Greek letters for Greek army – ΕΣ – epsilon sigma (Figure 4, left). It has been reported that they are still being used by the Greek coast guard. The Greek air force also used the FN M-1922 (Figure 4, right). It is believed that this is the only Greek air force marked FN 1922 in the United States. It was presented to a U.S. COL Papas.⁷

Mexico's law enforcement is all national – federales – a military organization. They used the FN model 1922 in 9mm corto (Figure 5), and the extractor was modified to act as a loaded chamber indicator to allow them to be imported to the U.S. after the GCA '68.⁸

Savage

Australia never officially adopted the .380, but Gunner Wilfred Hugh Chartier bought this Savage Model 1907 in England (Figure

6, left) and carried it during World War One until he was invalided back home.⁹ Similarly, Lieutenant Ronald Wynne Eaton, of the King Edwards Horse, purchased this Savage Model 1907 in London (Figure 6, right) and had it engraved. He later transferred to the Royal Artillery and was awarded the Military Cross for his actions in WWI.¹⁰



Figure 5. Mexico law enforcement FN Model 1922 marked on the right side of the frame "GOBIERNO DEL DISTRITO FEDERAL".



Figure 6. Savage Model 1907 owned by Gunner Wilfred Hugh Chartier (left and center) and the same model purchased by Lieutenant Ronald Wynne Eaton, of the King Edwards Horse (right).

Canada did not adopt the 9mm Browning short, but as a Commonwealth country, it encouraged officers to purchase their own sidearms. This Savage model 1915 was purchased in London, with British nitro proofs, and was carried by Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel Albert William Woods, head chaplain of the Canadian 3rd Division (Figure 7). He was mentioned in dispatches and awarded the Distinguished Service Order – which was NOT handed out for being a sky-pilot.¹¹



Figure 7. Savage Model 1915 carried by Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Albert Woods, D.S.O., head chaplain for the Canadian 3rd Division in WWI.

Frommer - Austrian-Hungarian Empire

The Austrian-Hungarian empire, however, did adopt and use the 9mm kurz in the unique long recoil Frommer Stop pistol, designed by Rudolph Frommer. It was used by Austria and Hungary through

WWI and WWII. First up is a specimen with a Hungarian crest stamped on the left trigger guard web (Figure 8). The Model 12 is also found with the Hungarian acceptance stamp and the Austrian acceptance stamp.¹²



Figure 9. Frommer designed 29 Minta (Femaru 29M). This example is a first production model, serial number 18.

Rudolf Frommer designed this simple, rugged pistol which was adopted by the Hungarian army as the 29 Minta (Figure 9). This was the last prototype, serial number 17. The first production 29M was serial number 18, based on the grips and the serial number placement. These were produced from 1929 to 1935.¹³ The 37M was Frommer's last design, appearing the year after his death. These were made in .32 during the German occupation as the P-37 (u) for *ungarische* – Hungarian. Some early models had a fluted barrel for weight reduction.¹⁴



Figure 8. Frommer Stop Model 12 pistol.



Figure 10. Czechoslovakia vz22 (left) and vz24 (right).

Vzor

Czechoslovakia was another nation that used the .380 as a front-line caliber. The vzor 1922 (Figure 10, left) was designed by Josef Nickl, based on his work at Mauser. He chambered it for the 9mm Nickl – a round identical to the .380 ACP. The first model had the extractor inside of the slide, which made maintenance difficult.¹⁵ The second model vz-22 has an external extractor. Production was limited to two years, but its service life extended through World War II. It was replaced by the vz-24 (Figure 10, right), a similar but simplified locked-breech design. It was used through World War II and after as an auxiliary weapon for police units. Unlike the vz-22, the vz-24 was also equipped with Bakelite grips. There is no known reason why any particular pistol would have either type of grip.¹⁶

To address the need for a larger magazine capacity the vz28 was developed. Often erroneously called a “long-frame vz-24,” the vz-28 was a distinct model. This specimen (Figure 11, left), one of 230 made for either the Lithuanian or Polish contract, is also fitted with a slot for a shoulder stock, an EXTREMELY rare accessory.¹⁷

The Czech army needed .380 pistols so desperately that they even purchased foreign made pistols, such as this Hungarian 29M

(Figure 9). It is identifiable by the Czech unit markings. The same is true of this German-made Ortgies pistol (Figure 12). Although it is not unit marked, it does have the Czech crest on the left rear of the slide.



Figure 12. German made Ortgies pistol purchased by the Czech Army and marked on the left rear of the slide.



Figure 11. Comparison of the vz28 (left) and vz24 (right).



Figure 13. Bulgarian vz38, note safety below the rear sight (left) and vz-38 from Finland with a SA stamp, indicating Finnish Army issue.

The vz-38 was adopted by the Czech army but was never issued because of the German conquest. It was double action only, and extremely easy to disassemble. Some experimental pistols were made for the Czech army using the pattern of the Bulgarian models. It has the Czech crest on the left front of the frame.¹⁸ Bulgaria bought approximately 1,000 experimental vz-38 in double and single action with a safety (Figure 13, left).¹⁹ Finland was a co-belligerent of Nazi Germany, not because they were fascists but because they were co-belligerents against the Soviet Union. Accordingly, they had access to Axis weapons, This vz-38 (Figure 13, right) is SA marked, standing for **Suomen Armeija - Finnish army**. The Finns also used vz-38s, and the SA stamp also appeared on the toe of the magazine.²⁰

The *Wehrmacht* used captured weapons as well as factories. In addition to using captured vz-24s (particularly rare and faked are the *Kriegsmarine* vz-24s), they also produced firearms. The vz-27 was in .32 ACP, but early in the occupation they produced vz-24s with vz-27 style slide serrations. None that I have seen have had factory serial numbers. The *Wehrmacht* also adopted the vz-38 as the Pistole 39 (t), or P-39(t) – the “t” standing for tzechoslovakia – the German word for Czechoslovakia – a pattern they would follow with other weapons captured from other countries as well. The *WaffenAmt* stamp is found on the left frame, and most of these are in horrible condition. The *Wehrmacht* detested the *Waffen SS*, as professionals hold political troops in disdain. They therefore did not cooperate in helping the *Waffen SS* arm themselves. So while the *Wehrmacht* obtained and used vz-38s, usually without *WaffenAmt* stamps, the *Waffen SS* had to scrounge parts to assemble. The CZ logo on the right side of the frame is obliterated, and this one utilizes one of the serrated hammers used on the safety-equipped pistols (Figure 14).²¹

Astra

During the Spanish Civil War, both sides used a wide variety of weapons, as did Franco after his victory. Astra supplied a variety of weapons, including Model 300s. This one was sent to the artillery park in Burgos (Figure 15). Spain also purchased Star Model S pistols in .380 to arm their pilots.²² The *Wehrmacht* made use of a wide variety of weapons during the war, and often purchased from fascist but officially neutral Spain – made easier when France was conquered. Astras were popular, including the Astra 300. Nazi

weapons can be identified by the *WaffenAmt* stamps – with the caveat that there are MANY fakes out there, and reproduction WaA punches. The code numbers and serial numbers are a good guide to additional authentication.²³



Figure 14. Waffen SS vz-38 with serrated hammers used on the safety-equipped pistols.



Figure 15. Astra Model 300 produced in Spain.

Llama

Ecuador wanted a small, reliable, and powerful pistol for its pilots that would not be cumbersome. They bought stainless steel Llama MicroMax pistols in 9mm corto (Figure 16).²⁴



Figure 16. Ecuador Llama MicroMax for Ecuador pilots.

Kongsberg

When the Germans occupied Norway, they famously used the Kongsberg arsenal. Included in this production was this copy of the Star Model D, serial number 1, so it was likely a prototype (Figure 17). Nothing else is known about this unique pistol.



Figure 17. German/Norwegian Kongsberg copy of Star Model D - Serial Number 1 - probably a prototype.



Figure 18. Walther PP ordered by the German Luftwaffe during WW II (left) and Chilean Walther PP (right).

Walther

While not the first double-action automatic pistol (that was the “Little Tom” designed by Alios Tomiska from Czechoslovakia and manufactured by Wiener Waffenfabrik from 1909 to 1925), double action semi-auto pistols, according to some firearm experts, are an “answer to a question that someone forgot to ask”, the Walther PP was certainly the most copied, such as the Hungarian knock-offs and the Makarov system.

The Luftwaffe ordered 1,000 Walther PPs. These incorporated the typical bottom magazine release and were issued to pilots and other aircrewmembers. During the war, Walther produced firearms using the “ac” code, and this example (Figure 18 left) was made quite late in the war. It incorporates a button magazine release, which was used in the .22, .25, and .32 versions, and which became standard after the war.²⁵ Chile bought a trial order of Walther PP pistols in 1938. This may be the only one in the U.S. (Figure 18 right).²⁶

Persia contracted with Walther for 2,000 9mm Kurz PPs. These are the only Walthers with the proprietary information on the right side of the slide. When Persia became Iran, they still had some of the Walther PPs in inventory. This one (Figure 19, left) was presented by Major General Batmanghlich, Chief of the General Staff of IIA to Capt. F.S. Gibson of the U.S. Ordnance Department for services rendered to the Iranian Arsenal Department of the IIA, as well as a Persian Luger. The silver inserts are in English on one side and Farsi on the other. Information is lacking on Capt. F.S. Gibson – apart from his service on the ROTC cadre at the University of Arkansas in the 1950s and rumors of a clandestine mission to Iran to train troops.^{27,28}

Very few Walther PPs from the Turkish contract are known in private collections. They have the TC marking and are marked Subaylara mahsunstur (Officer’s pistol). These served as the models for the MKE Kirrikale pistols. It is believed that only one was ever delivered (Figure 19, right).²⁹

Sometime towards the end of World War II, Walther decided to try a button magazine release on its .380 pistols instead of the bottom magazine release. The only known surviving example is shown below (Figure 20, left), using the “ac” production code of the Third Reich.

The idiotic Gun Control Act of 1968 prohibited the import of the Walther PPK based on its system of points. To get around this stupidity, Walther put the PPK slide and barrel on the PP receiver,



Figure 19. Persian Walther PP presented to Capt. Gibson (left) and a Walther PP, the only one made for Turkey (right).



Figure 20. Late production Walther PP with a button magazine release and ac markings, indicating production by the Third Reich (left) and Mexican Navy PPK/S manufactured by Smith and Wesson (right).



Figure 21. Walam 48 designed by Walther and Lampert (left) and Turkish Kirrikale MKE; this one had no serial number - just the name of General Mehmet Muzaffer Tuğsavul, to whom it was presented (right).

meeting the points requirement and calling the result the PPK/S (Polizei Pistole Kriminal/Sonder, or Special). The Mexican Navy ordered .380 ACP Walther PPK/S from Smith and Wesson, while S&W was the manufacturer of Walther U.S.A. (Figure 20, right). The order was eventually cancelled, and S&W sold the marked pistols.³⁰

Egypt ordered .380 ACP pistols from Hungary, the Walam 48 – so named because the design was from Walther and Lampert (Figure 21, left). With the Major’s Revolt, they were never delivered, and are often found with British nitro proofs on the chamber.³¹

Turkey began manufacturing its own copy of the Walther PP after World War II, by Makina ve Kimya Endüstrisi (MKE) at

Kirikkale (~castle ruin), Ankara, Turkey. Some were marked for and issued to a *Subaylarina Mahsus*, a Flight Officer and grips changed over time.³² This pistol (Figure 21, right) has no serial number. Instead, it has the name of the general to whom it was issued - Muzaffer Tughsavul, Inspector of the Army and a member of the Supreme Military Council. Dated 1948, the year of his promotion to full general; he died four years later.³³

Beretta

Italy replaced the underpowered 9mm Glisenti with the 9mm corto/.380 ACP with the Beretta Model 1934. In 1940, the guns were proofed with the FAG marking, standing for *Fabbrica Armi Guerra* - War Weapons Arsenal (Figure 22, left). The majority of pistols were inspected by the Fourth Technical Office, stamped by the Italians IVU, with Mussolini's obsession with the Romans and Roman numerals. This included the addition, after the year of manufacture, the year of Fascist rule in Roman numerals. Mussolini came to power in 1922. After German occupation, the initials in the oval were 4UT, meaning the same unit. Army pistols were marked RE - Regia Esercito - royal army - under a crown. Styles changed over times. Serialization began at 600100, and when they reached 999999, serialization began again with an F prefix and five digits. When the F numbers were used up, Beretta changed to a G prefix. These typically were supplied with a blank slide, as the

war was not going well. The Beretta Model 1934 was also purchased by the Finns. This one (Figure 22, right) was issued to COL Hannes Tallqvist, the chief equine veterinarian for Finnish forces in the Winter War and the Continuation War (Figure 22, right). As he was on the General Staff, his Sk. Y. - **Civil Guards Suojeluskuntain Yliesikunta** is traceable. The Beretta M-1934s issued to others are not traceable to individuals. They are, of course, marked with the SA.³⁴

After Italy surrendered, Germany took control of northern Italy, helped Mussolini escape, and he declared the Republic of Salo. This pistol (Figure 23, left) was made during this time, and has an AA suffix after the four-digit serial number. It is marked with an Air Force eagle on the left tang. The Roman numerals have disappeared. After running out of four-digit numbers, the final Nazi production had BB suffixes. Again, this one has an Air Force eagle on the left tang. The Model 1934 was produced after the war for the Italian Air Force and other forces. The M-1934 remained in service into the 1980s, and in production until the 1990s.³⁵

As a German ally in World War II, Romania acquired Beretta M 1934s from Italy (Figure 23, right). They are recognizable because the caliber marked is 9mm scurt, Romanian for short. In an attempt to get around GCA '68 point restrictions, the importer Armamentos in West Palm Beach, FL, made 12-inch barrels for the pistols.³⁶



Figure 22. Beretta Model 1934 with FAG marking for Fabbrica Armi Guerra (left) and Beretta M-1934 Issued to COL Hannes Tallqvist, chief equine veterinarian for the Finnish Army in the Winter War and the Continuation War. Sk.Y. = Civil Guards *Suojeluskuntain Yliesikunta* is stamped on the left side of the frame above the forward section of the trigger guard.

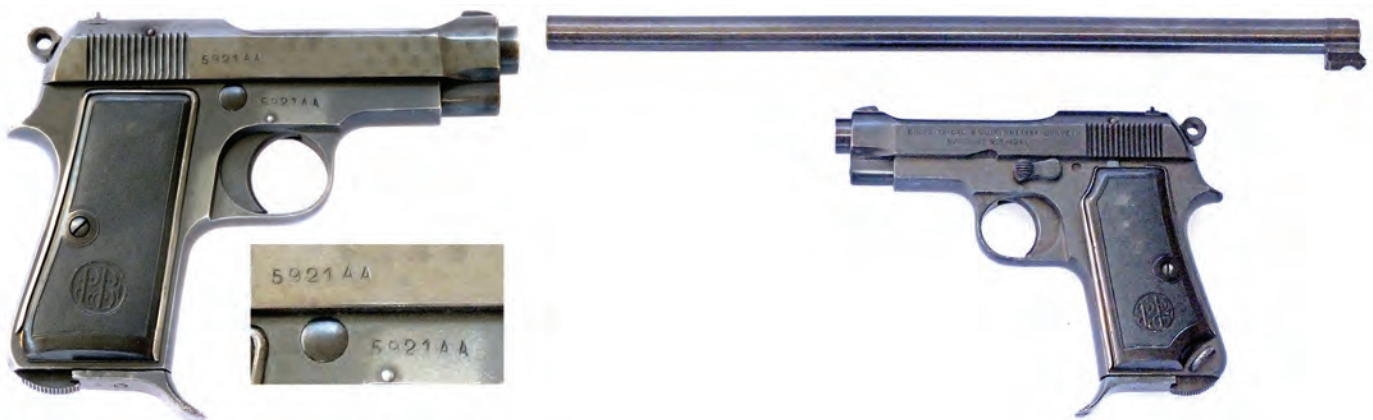


Figure 23. Beretta M 1934 with an AA suffix after the four-digit serial number (left) and Romanian Beretta M1934 (right).



Figure 24. Colt Model 1908 carried by Lt. Frederick Knox Ousley Moynan, Royal Engineers, in WWI (left) and an example carried by First Officer Bricker while flying for the Air Transport Command in WW Two (right).

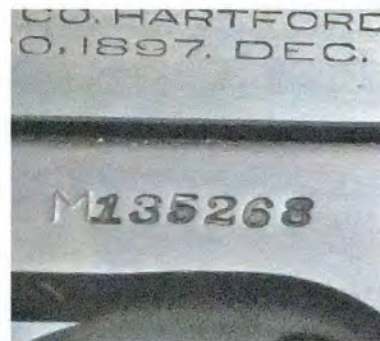


Figure 25. An example of a M 1908 used by the Office of Strategic Services (left) and “M” prefix added to the serial number of a pistol that had been returned to the factory to fix ejection issues (right).

Colt

The British encouraged officers to supply their own sidearms during the First World War. Frederick Knox Ousley Moynan, a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers, chose to purchase this Colt M-1908 in London, and had it engraved with his name and branch (Figure 24 left). He served in the Gallipoli Campaign with IX Corps. Between the wars, he was promoted to captain.³⁷ In the 1940 census, Harry Bricker was listed as a Marine Corps sergeant at Camp Lejune. The receipt for the purchase of this pistol (Figure 24 right) by First Officer Bricker at the American Airlines hanger in New York is confirmed by the Colt factory letter. He bought this

one week before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. During the war, he was commissioned as a captain and flew for the Air Transport Command.³⁸

3,113 Colt Model M 1908 Pocket Pistols were purchased by the U.S. government between March 3, 1942, and June 5, 1945. Only when these became unavailable did the government begin purchasing the Model 1903 in .32 ACP. Originally purchased as general officer’s pistols, some were also issued to pilots and members of the Office of Strategic Services (until they were no longer available) and then they used the less powerful M1903’s. Documented OSS guns are extremely rare (Figure 25, left). According to the



Figure 26. Colt Model 1908 issued to Brigadier General Ward H. Maris.

Figure 27. Colt Model 1908 purchased by United Airlines and marked "PROPERTY OF U.A.L."



Figure 28. Remington Model 51 marked "U.S. Property," although there is no record of such acquisition (left) and North Korea Nambu type 14 rebarreled to .380 (right).



Figure 29. Spanish JoLO used by the Peruvian Mounted Police (left) and an oddity produced in Turkey (right).

Colt factory letter, this pistol (Figure 26) was shipped on 26 August 1944 to BG Ward H. Maris at Camp Polk, LA, Headquarters Battery, XXI Corps.³⁹ Colt M-1908 returned to the factory for ejection issues were marked with a “M” prefix to the serial number to indicate this (Figure 25, right). This example was then shipped to the U.S. Navy; this model was also issued to naval flag officers.⁴⁰

This pistol was purchased by United Airlines and is so marked (Figure 27). It was turned in by Russell F. “Gus” Gustafson, then senior pilot at UAL. During World War Two, he also flew for the Air Transport Command. On this period, even before the war, pilots were to be armed to protect the U.S. Mail that they carried.⁴¹

Remington

There is no record of the U.S. ever purchasing or using the Remington Model 51, but this example (Figure 28, left) is marked U.S. Property and has the correct Remington E.E.C. inspector’s marks. In addition to the usual anchor proof, it also has an oversized anchor as well. In 1942, the U.S. was taking anything that would shoot. David Little was a commercial pilot who flew as a Naval Reserve officer during World War Two. He carried this pistol as a commercial pilot and a military pilot.⁴²

Miscellaneous

North Korea rebarreled captured Japanese Nambus to .380. After the surrender of Japanese forces in Korea, the North Koreans found themselves with lots of Nambu pistols and no source of ammunition. As the 8mm Nambu is an anemic cartridge, it appears that these were converted to a more available and more potent caliber. This is the only example I have seen (Figure 28, right).

The Jo-Lo-Ar was designed as a cavalry pistol, and the Peruvian Mounted Police, a paramilitary unit, bought them from Spain and used them (Figure 29, left). They were produced in several calibers.⁴³

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¹ Anthony Vanderlinden. *FN Browning Pistols: Sidearms That Shaped World History*. Greensboro, NC: Wet Dog Publications, 2005, Vol. I, pp. 35 – 40.

² Ibid, pp. 609-12

³ Ibid, pp. 623-4



Figure 30. Jungle made Viet Cong pistol

Turkey has a long-standing relationship with the .380 ACP. This odd pistol (Figure 29, right), which may have originally been a Ruby (Ruby was Spanish-made pistols for France during WWI), is identifiable by the TC marking on the right side of the slide - TC stands for *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti*, or Republic of Turkey – and the Turkish word for “safe.” Otherwise, it is a mystery. Supposedly, the British Black Museum has a similar pistol, but they have not been forthcoming to inquiries.

The provenance of this jungle-manufactured .380s is unknown (Figure 30), but there was a long history of improvised weapons in the wars in Southeast Asia.

- ⁴ Ibid, pp.637-53.
- ⁵ Ibid, pp. 613-22.
- ⁶ Ibid, p. 802.
- ⁷ Ibid, p.625.
- ⁸ Ibid, pp.626-28.
- ⁹ Virtual War Memorial Australia Virtual War Memorial | Hugh Wilfred CHARTIER (vwma.org.au); Savage factory letter in author's possession, dated 8 Non 2023.
- ¹⁰ Factory letter in possession of author, dated 2 Mar 2013; Lieutenant Rowland Wynne EATON Royal Garrison Artillery. | The National Archives
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- ²² Antaris, Leonardo. *Star Firearms*. Davenport, IA: FIRAC, 2001., pp. 180-86; *Astra Firearms and Selected Competitors*. Davenport, IA: FIRAC, 2009., pp. 263-79
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- ²⁶ 1938 PP in 9mm (.380) | Walther Forums
- ²⁷ WALTHER PP Pre-War Persian Contract for sale - Price and Used Value (bluebookofgunvalues.com); Walther PP - Wikipedia; Walther PP Persian Contract with E/N | Jan C. Still Lugerforums; Information sheet in possession of author.
- ²⁸ Nader Batmanghelidj - Wikipedia
- ²⁹ 1938 PP in 9mm (.380) | Walther Forums
- ³⁰ Smith & Wesson factory letter in author's possession, dated 19 Feb 2008.
- ³¹ A Walther copied by Hungary for Egypt: the WALAM 48 - Forgotten Weapons; Walam 48M - Hungarian Femaru FEG Pistol (hungariae.com)
- ³² Marschall, 2000. Op cit., p. 46; Gangarosa, 1999. Op cit., p. 91; Turkey PP KIRIKKALE | Walther Forums; Kirikkale pistol | Imperial War Museums (iwm.org.uk); Centrefire self-loading military pistol - Kirikkale MKE - made 1949 | Collection Object | Royal Armouries; Kirikkale province: Turkey's defense industry hub that lent its name to a pistol | Daily Sabah
- ³³ 'Muzaffer Tuğsavul' Inscribed Kirikkale (PP) Pistol | Rock Island Auction; Muzaffer Tuğsavul - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
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