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**MGI MARCK  
15 HYDRA  
16+ Caliber Carbine**

### GUN TESTS

- SMITH & WESSON M&P40 VTAC .40
- WILSON COMBAT TACTICAL 7.62x40 WT
- IRON RIDGE ARMS IRA-X THOR 7.62MM
- JP ENTERPRISES PSC-11 .223 WYLDE
- MGI MARCK 15 HYDRA 5.56MM

\$7.95



Display Until May 7, 2012



# MGI MARCK 15 HYDRA

First true **BATTLE-READY** modular weapon system that can handle 16+ calibers!

BY MATT BERGER

**T**here are a seemingly endless number of makers turning out AR-15 rifle and carbine variants. Many of them offer a quality product, and a few don't. It's our goal to sort the two out. Now and then, however, a manufacturer goes beyond quality and incorporates innovation into their AR-platform weapon. The Marck 15 is one such gun. It represents the biggest design advance in the history of the AR, and is intriguing by its own merit.

Founded in 2005, MG Industries, of Bangor, Maine, has pushed the envelope in terms of the platform's versatility by making it an individual, modular unit. The Marck 15, also known as the Hydra, was designed as a modular rifle capable of firing more than 16 various calibers, including .22, .223 or 5.56, 6.5 Grendel, 6.8 SPC, .450 Thumper, .458 SOCOM, 7.62x39mm, as well as the .45 Hybrid, M3 (Grease Gun) and LE in .45, 9mm and .40 LE (using Glock magazines), 7.62x25mm and the .45 Super Mag (.460), and .50 Beowulf. Many others are part of the MGI stable, with many more yet to go into production, but that's another story. The weapon will be available in semi-auto (full-auto for military use).

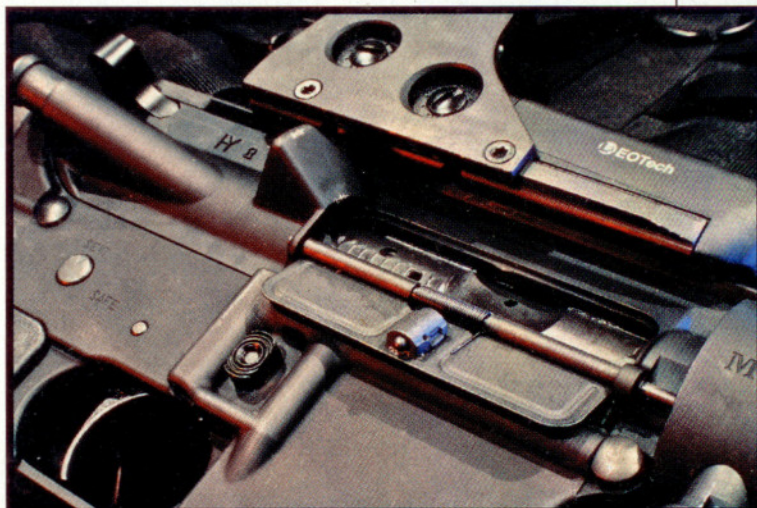
### Modular Design

That in itself is very useful, but it's been done before with various uppers. What may pique your interest, however, is that the Hydra is capable of shifting to another caliber in roughly 20 seconds, without tools, and without changing the upper. To be realistic, the average person will probably make the transition in 90 seconds, likely faster with a bit of practice. The Hydra takes it a step further,

though. It's one thing for a weapon to do so with expensive proprietary components, but the Hydra does it all with standard barrels and magazines.

The critical components involve a modular lower receiver, QCB-D upper receiver, interchangeable magazine wells, bolt carrier groups and barrels. The base weapon is the 5.56mm version with the QCB-D upper, modular lower receiver and magazine well, and a 16-inch barrel. The user can then build their system according to what other calibers they desire, purchasing the necessary components at their own pace and budget.

MGI's founder, Mack Gwinn, Jr., has an extensive background with small arms and combat experience that begins some four decades ago when



While the ability to switch between calibers may seem like a complicated process, the average shooter can do it in around 90 seconds with MGI's Marck 15, and all of its controls retain the familiar A2 configuration.



The MGI Marck 15 Hydra represents the biggest advance in AR-15/M16 design since its inception. It can be converted to more than 16 various calibers with its QCB-D upper, modular lower, various barrels and mag wells. Shown here with a SureFire Foregrip and EOTech HWS.

## MGI MARCK 15 HYDRA

# Step-by-Step Caliber Change



To change the Marck 15's caliber, begin by flipping the triggerguard down (1-2). Then, with the mag released depressed, slide the mag well up and off the lower (3) and then put the new mag well in place, letting the mag release snap back into position (4). Unhinge the locking arm from its housing (5), and slide the locking block off of the locking arms and 6 o'clock rail of the handguard (6-7). Swing the locking arms outward, and now the barrel can be withdrawn from the receiver (8).

he served as a member of the Army's Special Forces recon team in Vietnam. It was during this time that he considered what type of weapon design might make his team's missions and survival most effective. He would constantly strive to

design weapons and improve weapons systems from that point on. With some 25 patents in the firearms industry, most notable among his achievements would be the founding of Gwinn Firearms, which would later come to be known as

Bushmaster Firearms, beginning with the Bushmaster pistol in 1970. He eventually sold Bushmaster, but he went on to design the .50 Quick Change Barrel for FN, high-capacity magazines for MWG, and contributed to the creation of the first M16 rifles as a member of the ArmaLite design team, among other projects. Mack is no newcomer to designing firearms.

### SPECIFICATIONS:

## MGI MARCK 15 HYDRA 5.56MM

<b>CALIBER:</b>	5.56mm
<b>BARREL:</b>	16 inches
<b>OA LENGTH:</b>	35.5 inches
<b>WEIGHT:</b>	6.25 pounds (empty)
<b>STOCK:</b>	Adjustable M4
<b>SIGHTS:</b>	Mil-spec adjustable front post
<b>ACTION:</b>	Gas-operated, semi-auto
<b>FINISH:</b>	Hardcoat anodized black
<b>CAPACITY:</b>	30+1
<b>MSRP:</b>	\$1,250



### Gun Details

The Hydra, which draws its name from the seven-headed monster of Greek mythological fame, ships in a padded hard-polymer case with an instruction manual, sling and one D&D Thermold 30-round magazine. The fit and finish were quite good; the upper and lower receivers fit snugly with very little movement. The headspace was correct, and I noted that the gas key was properly staked.

The basic configuration of the Hydra is that of a 16-inch-barreled carbine with a Mil-Std-1913 flattop upper receiver, "A" post-mil-spec front sight and base, and the gun employs a well-made, machined 7075 aluminum forging quad-rail handguard, with the rails at 12, 3, 6, and 9 o'clock positions. The composite buttstock is adjustable for length of pull.

At the heart of the Hydra is its QCB-D (Quick Change Barrel, generation D, the fourth iteration of the design, offered with a piston-driven option) upper receiver with its locking-arm retaining block, the most noticeable addition to the standard AR-15. These uppers are machined from 7075 aluminum forgings. The retaining lock is attached to the 6 o'clock Picatinny rail on the forend, secures the barrel locking arms, and maintains a smooth, no-snag

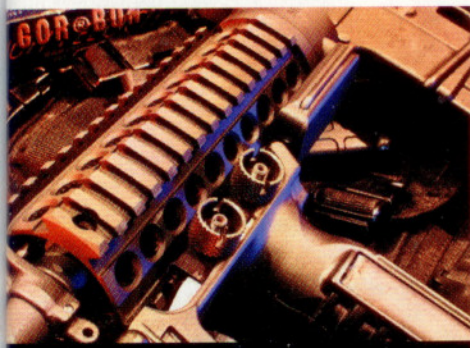
### PERFORMANCE:

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Black Hills 60 V-MAX	2,973	1.88
CorBon 55 JHP	3,055	0.81
Federal 43 Lite Open Tip Match	3,439	1.69
Speer 64 GDSP	2,789	1.63
Winchester 55 FMJ	3,249	1.25



Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second (fps) by Chrony Beta chronograph, and accuracy in inches for three-shot groups at 100 yards.

profile to the handguards. This allows the shooter to use any standard barrel by simply removing the Delta ring, barrel nut, front handguard keeper and sling swivel. Doing so also gives the added benefit of a free-floating barrel system. Shooters may snap the locking arm up off of the locking arm housings, then the block may then be slid forward off the arms, the arms rotated outward, and the barrel removed. Reversing the procedure allows another barrel to be installed. Changing calibers will also require the proper bolt and carrier to be dropped into the upper; bolts and carriers are mil-spec units, the bolts being machined from carpenter 151 steel.



Plenty of Picatinny rail space at the 3, 6, 9 and 12 o'clock positions gives operators many options for accessory attachments, like this SureFire vertical foregrip.

In the case of my sample, the retaining lock was quite tightly secured over the locking arm bases; I actually had to use a small screwdriver to break it loose the first few times, though after that I was able to do so with my fingers. The retaining lock is not flimsy.

The 16-inch barrel has an M4 exterior profile, though it has rifle ramps rather than M4 cuts. It has a 1-in-9-inch twist rate, and the business end is fitted with an A2 birdcage-style flash suppressor. The standard barrel isn't chrome-moly; Mack feels they're more accurate in 416 stainless as long as they are properly maintained; however, chrome-moly barrels (and just about any length and configuration) are available options. Barrels are completed in-house and start life as ER Shaw blanks.

MGI's own "Defender" D-ring is added to the extractor on the full-length rifle version; the D-ring provides more robust extraction, increasing the spring force of the extractor by four times. The extra force prevents centrifugal force from causing the extractor to lift and fail to extract with higher cyclic rates of fire.

If a different caliber is selected, the upper is removed, the triggerguard swung down, and the magazine release de-

## UNIVERSAL CHEST RIG

BY PHILLIP NULL

**A** collaboration between Eagle Industries and SKD Tactical has produced an updated version of Eagle's popular universal chest rig, this one designed to carry M4, AK or M14 rifle magazines, four pistol magazines, and any configuration of MOLLE-compatible holsters and pouches that can be fitted to its PALS webbing.

**SPECIAL FORCES DESIGN:** Built around an original design by Master Sergeant Paul Howe, a retired U.S. Army Delta Force operator and founder of training company Combat Shooting & Tactics, the SKD rig is made of heavy duty 1,000-Denier Cordura nylon and improves on Howe's design by providing space for customization. It removes radio-specific pouches included with the original and replaces them with two columns and four rows of modular PALS webbing that can accept attachments based on user preference and operational need.

The low-profile main panel of the rig is 21.5 inches wide by 7 inches tall. Four permanent open-top rifle magazine pouches are located on its front, and each are able to fit two 30-round M4 magazines or one AK or M14 magazine. The outer pouches on the left and right feature an adjustable retention strap that allows carriage and retention of a handgun on the wearer's strong side. Four single pistol magazine pouches fitted to the front of the larger rifle pouches provide for carrying up to four pistol magazines or flashlights, knives or other small tools. These are secured with two draped Velcro flaps, each covering two pouches. A 1-inch elastic band on every pouch secures the magazines in place and a grommet at their base allows liquid and debris to drain.

Two columns of PALS webbing are to the left and right of the permanent pouches. On the back of the panel a mesh pouch and an internal pocket with a Velcro closure and pull tab provide storage and quick access for documents, medical bandages and dressings,

pressed; the magazine well will then slide up off of its dovetail in the lower receiver. The new magazine well is then slid down onto the receiver until it snaps over the magazine release, and the triggerguard is then replaced. Other than the modular magazine wells, the lowers are standard AR-15 fare, machined from 7075 aluminum forgings. In changing magazine wells, the gun may utilize the appropriate magazines for each caliber, as they were originally intended—there's no need for expensive, proprietary, ill-functioning magazines that attempt to feed the various calibers through the standard 5.56mm well.



SKD Tactical's Universal Chest Rig has four permanent, open-top pouches on the front that can hold two 30-round M4 mags each.

or other flat items. Two foam-padded shoulder straps cross on the back and attach to the body with 1.25-inch Fastex buckles in front and 1-inch buckles on the sides. An adjustable 1-inch waist belt completes the system and tightens it to the body.

**PERFECT FIT:** The rig can be worn alone or over armor as required and is fully adjustable to even the smallest and largest body frames. Available in five solid colors, as well as MultiCam and AUC patterns, it can be purchased to match the preference of an individual or the uniform standards of an agency. The materials and their stitching are high quality and maintain the solid manufacturing expected of Eagle products. Both shoulder straps support and equally distribute a fully-loaded rig and allow it to be worn comfortably and without strain. Their low profile also allows most packs to be carried over them without interference. The near unlimited options for carriage and customization make this chest rig a true universal setup that will meet the needs of any shooter regardless of their choice of weapons. Priced below \$100, its value, quality, and modularity will be hard to match. For more information, visit [skdtac.com](http://skdtac.com).

### Range Time

It was time to see how the base gun performed. No matter how adaptive it is, the weapon's value is no greater than its basic functioning. I secured an EOTech 512 to the receiver's Picatinny rail for sighting duties and began with simple accuracy testing. With targets stapled up at 100 yards, I benched the Hydra on a sandbag and fired three-shot groups to see what accuracy the Hydra could produce. After several shots to zero the scope, I was able to wring a best group of 0.81 inches out of the Hydra with CorBon's 55-grain JHP. The largest pattern of the day was only 1.88 inches from

## MGI MARCK 15 HYDRA



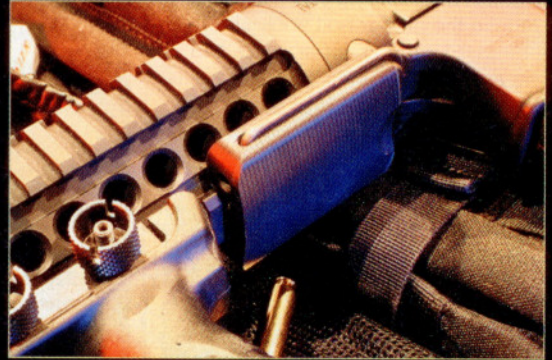
MGI's Marck 15 Hydra can be configured to accept AK mags, which should come in handy for soldiers abroad who have captured enemy AKs. The Hydra's adaptability even gives police officers an edge when they need to switch to .308.

Black Hills' 60-grain V-MAX. This is good accuracy for an AR-15 equipped with a zero-magnification EOTech HWS and a military trigger.

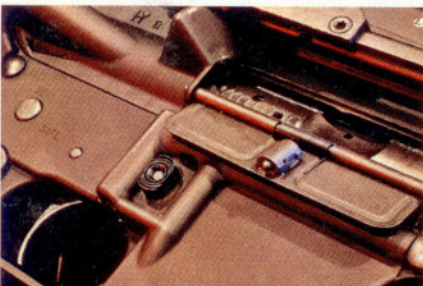
Most importantly, the gun ran flawlessly all afternoon. I fired it on its side, upside-down, and even with the buttstock off of my shoulder but was unable to induce a malfunction. All controls were standard mil-spec, feeling and operating the same as any mil-spec AR. The magazine well felt solid, and there was no shifting or slop as one might expect with its detachable design—and it was the same with the barrel. The Hydra could be handed to any blindfolded shooter familiar with a standard black rifle, and they'd never know there was any difference, save for the locking block under the handguards.

The military trigger presented no surprises. It broke at 6.25 pounds with the same amount of creep one would expect

Mack Gwinn revolutionized the AR-15 with the Hydra, but the only immediately obvious visible difference from a standard AR-15 is the Marck 15's retaining locking arm block on the 6 o'clock handguard rail, which helps shooters switch between barrels.



MGI's logo is engraved on the end of the handguard. It's present in more than one place on the Hydra, letting others know you have a quality weapon from a designer who has more experience in the firearms industry than most.



All MGI components are hardcoat anodized black per mil-spec, and all controls have the familiar A2 configuration. With a blindfold on, one might not notice any difference.

from a military trigger. The magazine release functioned exactly as it should.

Wondering how close to zero the Hydra would hold after removing and replacing the barrel, I endeavored to find out after my accuracy and velocity tests were complete. The test was simple enough,

and consisted of removing and replacing the barrel, then checking its 100-yard zero. After doing this twice, I couldn't discern any difference in the point of impact through the EOTech. A more precise test would have been possible with a quality high-power scope, but my tests were sufficient enough to demonstrate that practical accuracy hadn't been diminished by barrel changes.

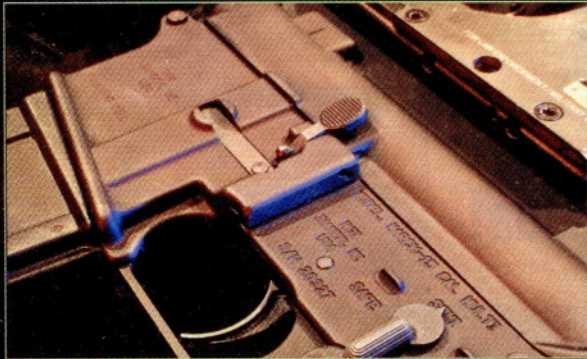
### Final Notes

As a basic AR-15, the Hydra performed as well as a plethora of quality black rifles I've handled over the years, both in accuracy and reliable feeding, and there were no differences when it came to basic function and handling. In terms of the special functions of quickly removing and replacing the barrel and magazine well, everything worked as MGI claims, and the gun held its zero well enough that if there was any change, it was not detectable using the EOTech.



MGI outfits the Hydra with a six-position adjustable stock constructed of durable composite material. Adjusting the length of pull allows operators to adapt the rifle to specific missions, such as when body armor or heavy winter clothing is needed.

**“Most importantly, the gun ran flawlessly all afternoon. I fired it on its side, upside-down, and even with the buttstock off of my shoulder but was unable to induce a malfunction.”**



Upon closer examination, the mag well has a raised, trailing edge that is the only visible difference in the lower receiver. The entire mag well, beveled for faster reloads, can slide off the lower when switching from one caliber to another.

The Mil-Std-1913 rail flattop upper combines with the quad-rail handguard to form an almost continuous top rail, allowing shooters to customize the rifle with their desired optics and sights—yet another modular capability of the Marck 15.



A more comprehensive test of the gun's "convertibility" would have been to switch calibers as well, but I wasn't given that opportunity with the components for such a caliber change. Given how efficiently the existing components were removed and reinstalled, however, I have no doubts that the MGI system works as well with the other available components for caliber conversion.

Mr. Gwinn's designs for caliber conversion are truly revolutionary, with no obvious shortcomings that I was able to discern. Having fired rifles chambered in calibers such as the .458 SOCOM and .50 Beowulf, I'm able to fully appreciate how vastly different the performance of such calibers are in the AR-15 platform. And the value for affordability in shooting and plinking with the .22 conversion is obvious. All of this is achieved without changing the entire upper.

Special military units would find the gun quite valuable, especially in combat

environs like Afghanistan. Other than its standard 5.56mm trim, the weapon could be used to adapt to captured AK-47 magazines and ammunition, and heavier calibers such as .308 Winchester could be selected for better stopping power or for turning what amounts to cover for the 5.56mm into concealment.

If you're a shooter looking for an AR that can fire multiple calibers, but you don't want to have a collection of different rifles, the MGI Marck 15 Hydra fits the bill nicely. That, in the end, separates the Marck 15 Hydra from all other black rifle variants out there.

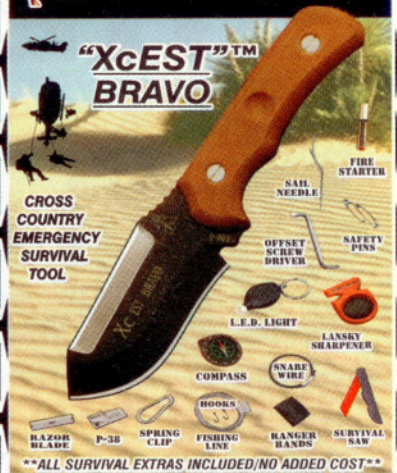
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