

LASERS FOR CONCEALED CARRY

By Duane A. Daiker

Photography by Teresa Daiker



Joe's concealed carry equipment: .357 S&W 340PD J-Frame revolver with Crimson Trace grips and fiber optic front sight, speed strip for revolver loaded with .38 Speer Gold Dot +P 135-grain JHP's, .40 Glock 23 with TRUGLO TFO Sights, Galco ankle holster, Galco Royal Guard ITW holster, TDI K-Bar knife, SureFire E2D tactical flashlight, and Kershaw folding knife.

and improving Kentucky's concealed carry law. This law permits law abiding citizens to have the means to defend themselves from criminal attack when traveling outside their homes. I volunteer my free time to this organization because I feel strongly about the right of the individual to protect themselves and their families.

I maintain memberships in the following organizations for the same reasons: International Assoc. of Law Enforcement Firearm Instructors (IALEFI), International Law Enforcement Educators & Trainers Association (ILEETA), American Society of Law Enforcement Trainers (ASLET), Life Member of the Law Enforcement Alliance of America (LEAA), and the American Woman's Self-Defense Association (AWSDA), National Rifle Association (NRA), and Gun Owners of America (GOA).

Defensive Handgun Training LLC currently provides the following training and services: KY, OH, UT and FL Concealed Carry Permit Course's, Handgun Tactics Course, NRA Pistol Course, Handgun Orientation Course (for new handgun owners), Firearm Safety Course for Teenagers, and GLOCK Armorer services. Defensive Handgun Training LLC also possesses a FFL (Federal Firearms License) and now sells firearms and other shooting related equipment.

I can be reached at Defensive Handgun Training LLC:

www.DefensiveHandgunTraining.com

or via e-mail at:

JoeKalil_DHT@insightbb.com



I remember the first time I saw a laser sight. It was being used by Arnold Schwarzenegger in *The Terminator*, in 1984. It seemed like science fiction gadgetry at the time. Now, you can buy a \$30 Airsoft gun with a laser (of sorts) attached. Lasers are in use by law enforcement, the military, and now more and more by civilians with carry permits. New handgun laser sight products are appearing all the time. The original handgun laser devices were clunky and delicate, and they required special holsters, if you could holster those guns at all, with their lasers in place. Modern handgun lasers have come a long way, and are durable, practical, and easy to carry.

WHY USE A LASER?

I have to admit that I first considered a laser sight on a handgun to be unnecessary, and a little bit too "Rambo." However, I have spent a considerable amount of time using lasers, training with lasers, and researching lasers, and I have definitely changed my mind. Laser sights for handguns offer a lot of tactical

advantages worth considering. While this is not intended to be a comprehensive essay on the advantages of lasers, here are a few that I think are important, in no particular order:

- **Ability to shoot in low light conditions:** It is well known that most armed confrontations happen at night, in low light environments. For this reason, many of the top trainers will recommend night sights for your carry guns. Lasers offer a similar advantage, being extremely visible in low light conditions.

- **Aimed fire in awkward positions:** Unlike conventional iron sights, laser sights do not require the firearm to be brought into alignment with your eyes. When activated, a laser sight indicates the approximate point of impact of a fired round, no matter what the orientation of the gun. Although perhaps not ideal shooting postures, a laser sight could permit you to provide aimed fire from the hip, or over the shoulder (such as when shooting out of seated position in a car, during a car-jacking), or even from under a table at which you are sitting. Gunfights are very dynamic events that



GLOCK 21 AND STREAMLIGHT TLR-2

rarely lend themselves to a perfect Weaver stance. Shooting on the move, shooting off-balance, and rolling on the ground are all possibilities in a fight for your life, and the laser sight can help you deliver aimed fire when your iron sights cannot. If you have any doubts about this, an afternoon of force-on-force training will convince you that lasers can seriously boost your hit ratio when engaged in a struggle with a real life opponent who is shooting back!

- **Threat focused sighting:** Studies have shown that humans tend to have difficulty taking their focus off of an approaching threat and onto their front sight. This isn't hard to believe. Imagine switching to a fine focus on your front sight when a giant thug is running at you, screaming and waving a butcher knife. The laser sight projects a red dot right onto your target, keeping the threat in clear focus, while still permitting aimed fire. While unaimed point shooting will work at close ranges, the laser dot makes a fast, accurate, and confident shot much easier.

- **Deterrent effect:** Studies have also shown that lasers can end hostilities before shots are fired. While this may be more important for law enforcement officers who are more likely to hold suspects at gunpoint, there are potential moments in a "civilian" gunfight where the armed victim is justified in drawing on the attacker, but the attacker has a brief window in which to re-evaluate his intended course of action before lead starts to fly. Seeing the red dot on one's own anatomy can be quite traumatic. Everyone knows that means they are a few pounds of pull on a trigger away from being ventilated. In some circumstances, a

laser sight may actually prevent you from having to use deadly force.

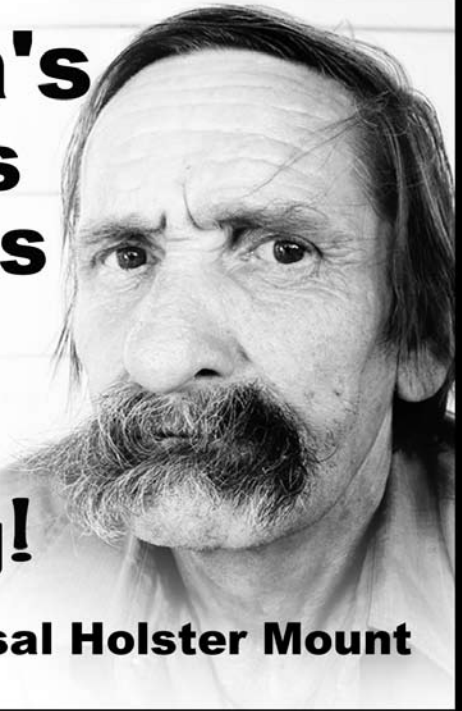
WHICH LASER SHOULD I USE?

There are a large number of competitive laser sight products on the market. All

of them are battery operated and project a visible laser beam onto your target. (To date, almost all laser sights have used red laser beams, but green lasers are making their first appearance in the market.) Beyond that basic description, there are a lot of differences. I divide laser sights into five basic categories:

- **Rail-mounted lasers:** More and more handguns are equipped with Picatinny, Weaver or tactical type rails. Several manufacturers make laser sights that will mount directly to a rail. They can be activated either with a toggle switch on the back of the unit (accessible with the trigger finger) or with pressure switches adhered to the pistol grip and attached to the unit with a wire. These laser units are very easy to install, and easy to remove when not needed. The disadvantages are that they add some weight and bulk to the weapon, and prevent the use of regular holsters when the laser is in place. This last problem is being addressed by many holster makers, who are now making holsters to accommodate handguns with mounted lasers. These types of laser units are made by a large number of manufacturers, including Laserlyte.


Continued on page 16



Grandpa's Gun Was Under His Pillow

There's A Safer Way!

Sure Set Universal Holster Mount



Sure Set Holster Mounts, Inc.

"Where you want it, When you want it."

www.sshmi.com



**CRIMSON TRACE
LASERGRIPS 340**



**ARMALASER UNIT MOUNTED TO
A KEL-TEC P-3AT**



**CRIMSON TRACE
LASERGRIPS 642**



STREAMLIGHT TLR-2

• **Rail-mounted laser/tactical light combos:** These all-purpose units combine a laser sight unit, as described above, with a tactical light. These units can be configured to project a laser beam, project white light, or both at the same time. In my opinion, if you are going to hang a laser off of the front of your gun, you might as well have a tactical light too. The industry leader in laser/tactical light units is Streamlight, which is my personal favorite. Streamlight offers a lower priced MX-6, and the all-metal construction TLR-2, both of which are fantastic products that I recommend to you.

• **Specially mounted lasers:** The original handgun laser units attached mostly to the trigger guards. Now there are far better ways to attach lasers to guns of compact size and larger. However, a new market has developed for lasers for sub-compact guns that can't accommodate lasers in the same way as larger guns. Examples of this type of laser are the Pocket

Slipper and the Armalaser. These devices permit you to have a laser sight even on pocket guns, like the NAA Guardians or the smallest Kel-Tecs. I have previously reviewed the Armalaser products (May/June 2006 issue), and find them to be of the highest quality and backed by tremendous customer support.

• **Guide rod replacement lasers:** Lasermax makes laser units that actually replace the guide rod and spring assembly in certain models of semi-automatic pistols. The laser beam emits from the front muzzle of the gun where the guide rod is exposed. These lasers add virtually no weight or bulk to the gun, and work with standard holsters. These units work quite well, although some people express concerns about replacing the guide rod, a critical component of their firearm. My experience with Lasermax units is very limited, compared to the other types mentioned, but they appear to be a quality product.

• **Lasergrips:** Crimson Trace is the only company making replacement grips that incorporate a laser sight. The Lasergrips add no weight or bulk to the gun and permit the use of standard holsters. The grips have the added advantage of built-in pressure switches in the grip for instinctive activation, without sticky-tape or loose wires. The Crimson Trace units are available for a wide variety of handguns, and are the only laser units made for revolvers. Crimson Trace Lasergrips are my personal favorite laser sights for any of my guns that they fit, and Crimson Trace leads the industry in new model development.

HOW SHOULD I TRAIN?

The standard mantra is to train with what you carry. If you are going to carry a laser equipped gun, you need to train with it. If you are going to formal training, make sure your instructor is willing to work with a laser. I attended the Snubby Summit in Florida earlier this year, and

KIMBER

many of the students and instructors used Crimson Trace Lasergrrips on their snub-nose revolvers.

Perhaps the only significant disadvantage to using a laser sight may be a tendency to rely too heavily on it. Laser sights are potentially subject to failure, as are all electronic devices. For that reason, you must not only train with your laser sight, but you should train without it as

well. Your training regimen should include shooting at all realistic ranges, both with and without the laser. In the event the laser fails, you want to be able to transition effortlessly to your iron sights.

Laser sights also provide a significant training advantage. Dry fire practice with your laser sight can be very beneficial. [Always, always, always ensure that the firearm is unloaded and pointed in safe direction whenever conducting dry fire practice.] It can help you to identify trigger control issues, flinches, and other common problems. Using the laser sight also helps you to get accustomed to your own natural movement when on target. You never realize how much your gun wobbles on the target until a laser beam shows you in real time!

FINAL THOUGHTS

Laser sights are a very beneficial tool for the concealed carry handgun. Laser sights are available in any number of configurations to fit your existing gun, holster and needs. With proper training, there are few disadvantages to using a laser in the types of encounters the average armed

citizen may encounter. Lasers can help you get on target quickly in dynamic situations, in low light, and from awkward positions. And in some circumstances, lasers may have a deterrent effect that prevents you from having to use deadly force. All of this can amount to a significant advantage in a gunfight, turning the odds in your favor. I believe in the advantages of laser sights on a concealed carry gun, and I encourage you to examine them for yourself.

www.laserlyte.com
www.armalaser.com
www.lasermax.com
www.crimsontrace.com
www.streamlight.com
www.xssights.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Duane A. Daiker is a Contributing Editor for CCM, but is otherwise a regular guy—not much different from you. Duane has been a lifelong shooter and goes about his life as an armed, responsible, and somewhat opinionated citizen. Duane can be reached at: Daiker@RealWorldCarryGear.com

His other feature articles and Real World Carry Gear columns can be viewed at: www.RealWorldCarryGear.com



BERETTA 92FS WITH CRIMSON TRACE LASERGRIPS