



M1 Garand: 30-06 vs. 7.62 NATO

by: [Jamie Mangrum](#)

Recently I was given the opportunity to shoot an **odddity** at the range. A friend of mine loaned me an [M1 Garand](#) that had been modified to shoot 7.62x51 NATO. It was not one of the newly manufactured aftermarket models ([Springfield Armory](#)) that you may have read about, but a U.S. Military modified M1 Garand. I have read that when the M14 was adopted by the rest of the U.S. Military that the Navy decided that since small arms were a secondary concern that they would stay with the M1 Garand and just convert it to shoot the newly adopted 7.62 NATO cartridge. They contracted with H.P. White Laboratories in Maryland to have a special chamber insert built to allow the Garand to use the NATO cartridge.

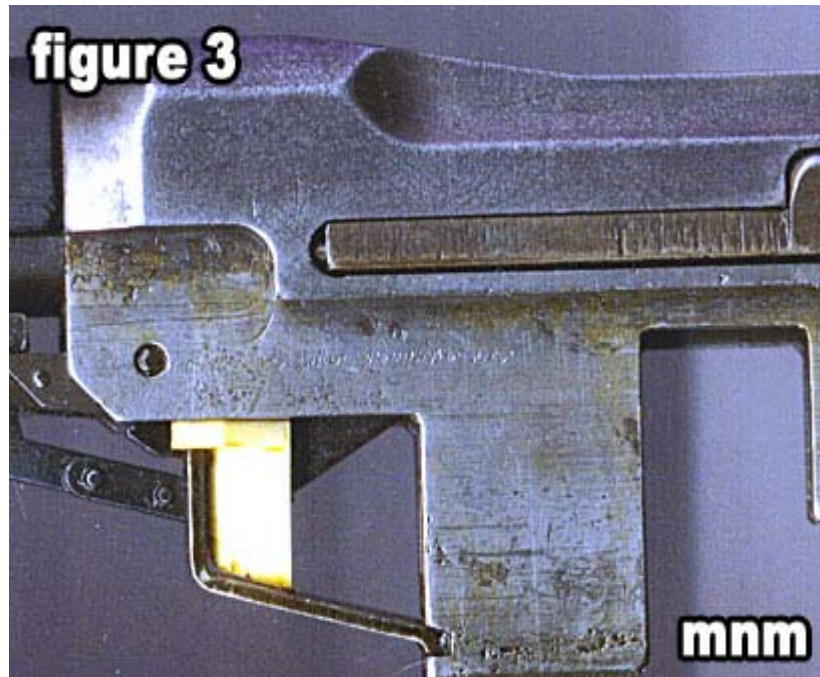
figure 1



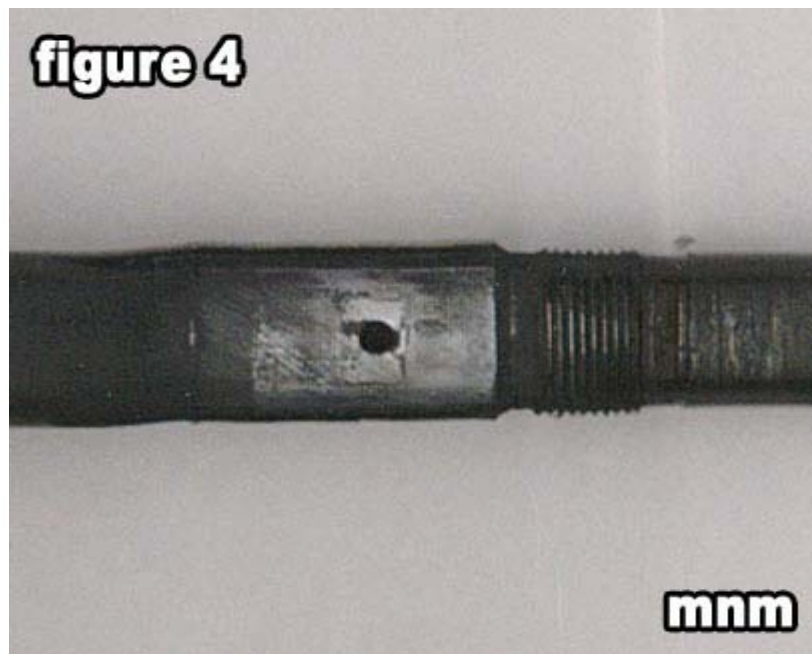
7.62x51 NATO loaded enbloc magazines sitting to the left of 30-06 cartridges in enbloc magazines.



Barrel Marked "7.62 NATO Mod 2



Plastic insert that blocks the ability to load 30-06 cartridges.



7.62x51 NATO gas port hole (enlarged port).



30-06 gas port hole (standard port).

The end result was a very simple modification that involved the installation of a sleeve of sorts, that when installed in the existing rifle chamber allowed the insertion of the 7.62 NATO cartridge. The gas port was then enlarged (as shown in **figures 4 and 5**) and a plastic bushing or stop was installed in the magazine well to block off the shooter's ability to insert 30-06 cartridges (as shown in **figure 3**). It was later discovered that the sleeve could become dislodged and actually be ejected with a spent shell casing. If gone unnoticed this could be a potentially dangerous situation at the very least. An attempt was made to correct this by placing grooves in

the rifles chamber prior to installing the insert. This allowed the insert to be better anchored when installed. This only marginally corrected the problem. A larger number of Garands were modified in a similar fashion for the Navy, but without the chamber insert and instead having a 7.62 NATO barrel installed.

The rifle I shot for this article still has the original insert. When I placed a light into the bore you can see it, but I could not take a successful photo for the article.



7.62x51 NATO modified M1 Garand

The insert seemed to be very much intact and serviceable on inspection. I loaded up my range kit with a 100 rounds of Portuguese surplus 7.62 NATO and 100 rounds of Danish surplus 30-06 and headed off to the range.

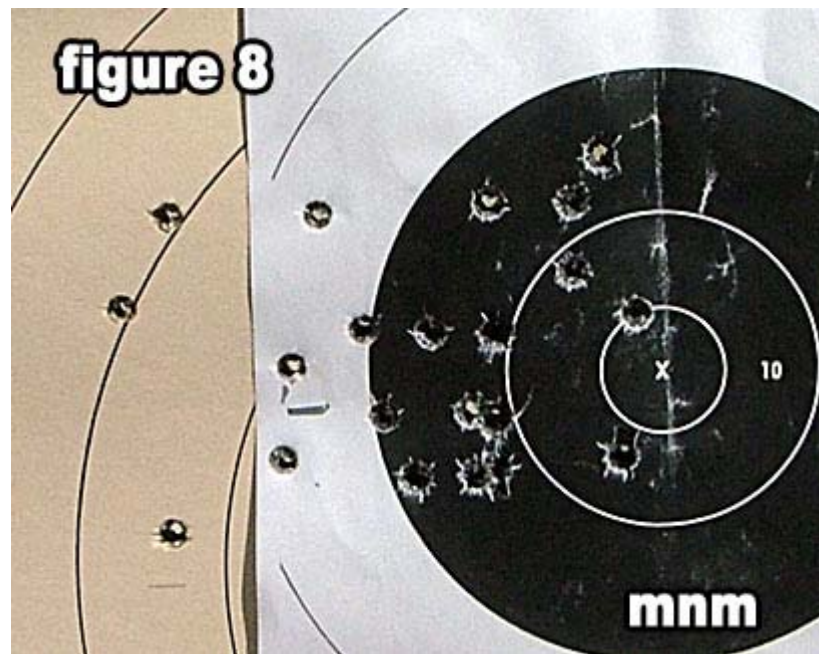


My beautifully 100% restored 30-06 M1 Garand. The one that started everything!

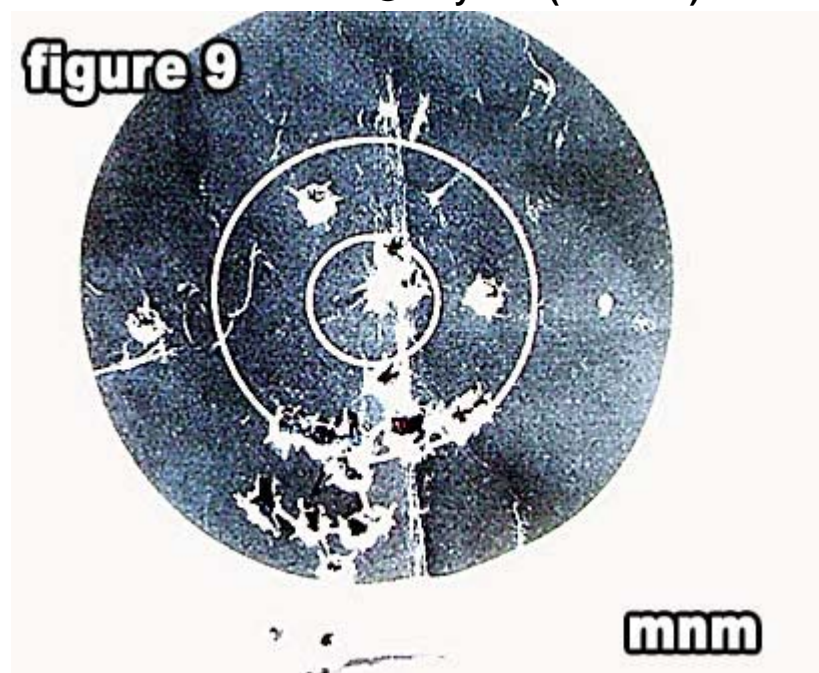
I wanted to shoot a standard M1 Garand chambered in 30-06 caliber side-by-side with the modified rifle. This would give me the opportunity to compare things like: recoil, accuracy, and general handling. I decided that since I had not taken my favorite rifle to the range in a while, she would be my choice. She, as I refer to her is a rifle I picked up in a local store about 25 years ago for around \$100. I did not know anything about Garands at the time (*or the necessity of rifling in a barrel for that matter*). I took her to the range and started shooting her. When I examined my first target I was surprised to find that the bullets were actually keyholing the target. This is when bullets tumble and do not fly a straight and true path to the target and literally impact the target sideways. So as a result my target was peppered with little silhouettes of bullets. After close inspection of the bore by a gunsmith we found that the rifling was very worn to the point of being unserviceable. Being a somewhat intelligent lad (*I can tie my own shoes*) I recognized that she was beautiful, but unsafe to shoot in her current condition. Not knowing of anyone that could remedy the problem, I stored her in the back of my closet that houses my gun safe. Several years later I pulled her out of the closet and dusted off the cobwebs. I did this because I had seen a website for a company that could breath new life into her and restore her to her original grandeur. I sent her off to be repaired. She came back with a brand new barrel, completely reparkerized, and with a brand new walnut stock. **Orion 7** is the company that did the work (*Sadly - please note that Orion 7 no longer does shop work on M1 Garands but still sell parts and supplies*).

I know each of us has **that** very first mil-surp rifle that made us realize that there was more to firearm collecting than the sterile, commercially made firearms we purchase at local sporting goods stores. She was mine. From this point forward I only wanted firearms with history. I only wanted a firearm that had seen life and history other than being stored in someone's closet.

From this point on - I was hooked forever on mil-surp firearms!



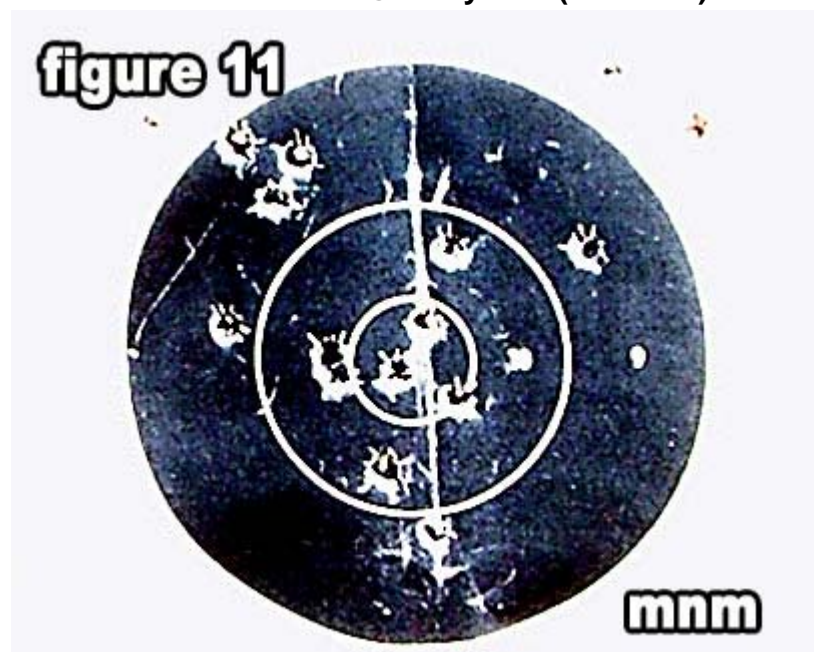
7.62x51 NATO @ 50 yards (24 shots)



30-06 @ 50 yards (24 shots)



7.62x51 NATO @ 100 yards (24 shots)



30-06 @ 100 yards (24 shots)

Both rifles handled very well and were accurate. Although I did not think it was a fair test because one of the rifles had a new barrel. **Figures 8 and 10** above show the targets I shot with the modified Garand, while **figures 9 and 11** show the targets shot with my 30-06 Garand. I really apologize as I have a new camera and did not have the settings set correctly when photographing a couple of the targets. As a result some of the photos were washed out in appearance and I had to really work to get the images shown above.

Enough of the groveling. What the photos do show is:

- 30-06 Garand out-shot the modified Garand (*this was expected*);
- 7.62 NATO Garand shot better at 100 yards than 50 yards.

The 7.62 NATO Garand was much more kind to my shoulder and cheek. The recoil was considerably less. I have to say that I am always surprised as to how much recoil the Garand produces (*and so is my shoulder*). You would think that an 11 pound, semi-automatic firearm would produce less recoil - but it is just not the case. Don't get me wrong - it is not punishing, but very noticeable.

The 8 round, enbloc clips worked exactly the same and flawlessly in the modified Garand as they did in my 30-06 Garand.

I think I would like to own a 7.62 NATO Garand if not for the savings and availability of ammo. There is so much high quality surplus 7.62 NATO on the market and it is **cheap!** I can purchase 7.62 NATO ammo for not much more than I pay for 7.62x39 ammo for my SKS carbines. Imagine that! Shooting a Garand for the cost of shooting an SKS. But, I would choose to have a 7.62 NATO barrel installed on a receiver instead and not opt for a rifle with the insert.

There are several companies online that offer either the conversion or a newly assembled rifle for sale.

Here are a few:

<http://www.dgrguns.com/>

<http://www.fulton-armory.com/>

<http://www.smithenterprise.com/>

<http://www.garandguy.com/>

jlM:)

Sources:

- <http://www.odcmp.com/Services/Rifles/762MM.htm>
- [Bruce N. Canfield's Complete Guide to the M1 Garand and Carbine](#)

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