



By James L. Ballou

J. Edgar Hoover's WMD

The Colt Monitor B.A.R.

The mechanized bandits of the 1930's had a great affect upon police weapons of that era. Even rural police departments felt they had to have a Colt Thompson on hand "just in case" Dillinger or Pretty Boy Floyd came to town. Small towns, such as Lower Gwynedd Township police department in Pennsylvania, purchased a 1921/8 Colt overstamp complete with case and accessories (No. 9507). They just had to have a cased Colt "Chopper". By then, the prestigious Federal Bureau of Investigation had acquired several hundred Thompsons. Mr. Hoover, in fact, sent a new Thompson, complete with ammunition, to his prized agent, Melvin Purvis. Some Special Agents purchased them with their own funds.

Most of the Colt Thompsons in the New England area were Colt 1921/8 overstamped Navy's. This was the result of a zealous salesman who plied the roads of the East Coast with only Navy overstamps as samples.

While Thompsons were popular with police departments, they were somewhat ineffective against car bodies of that era. Upon studying the cars of the 30's, one can understand why the Thompson in .45 ACP was not reliable in penetrating them. There are numerous tales of ACP FMJ's glancing off the tough old Model A's. The fender of the car was as thick as a WWII GI "pot"

helmet. It became apparent to anyone who had exchanged fire with the "motorized bandits" that a weapon with greater penetrating power was needed.

In 1931, Colt introduced a BAR specifically geared for the law enforcement community. It was a commercial Browning Automatic Rifle with a pistol grip, shortened barrel and an elaborate compensator. The first two were shipped to Charlestown Prison (later to become Bunker Hill Community College) in Boston, MA on March 25, 1931. (Serial No's C-102792, C-102793). The official factory designation was R-80 and commonly known as the "Monitor".

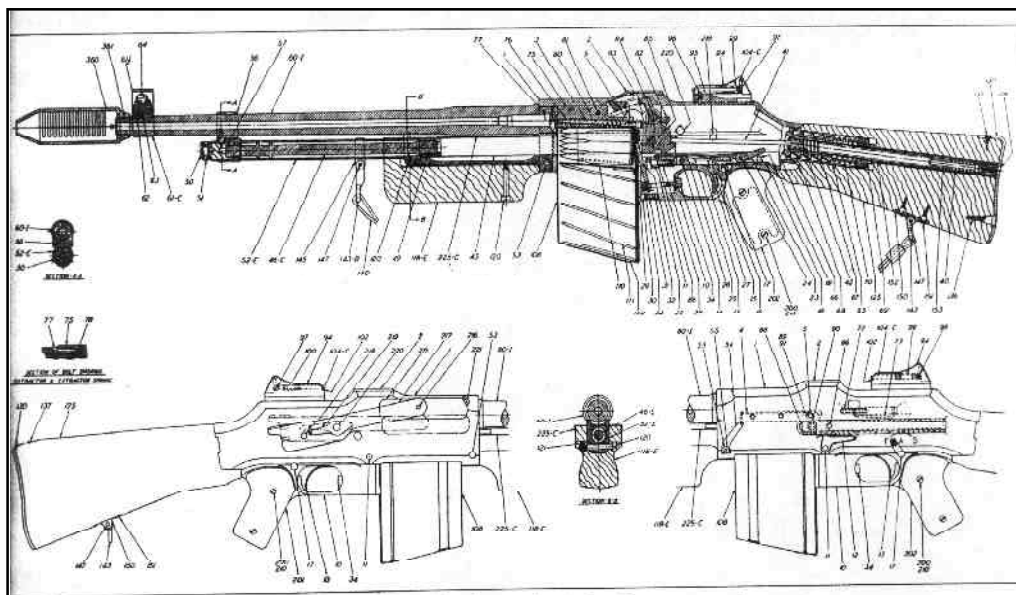
The FBI purchased approximately 90 Monitors and put them on display in a series of propaganda films depicting Mr. Hoover overseeing some of his agents firing (with tracer) at cars. The Monitor did its job well and soon the cars were chopped

to pieces by the armor piercing .30-06. This was Mr. Hoover's weapon of mass destruction as it put his men on equal footing with the likes of Bonnie and Clyde. The Monitor was the first official "Fighting Rifle" of the FBI.

In the capture and shooting of Bonnie and Clyde, along with a multitude of weapons, BAR's and one Monitor were used. The Barrow's gang had two BAR's, dozens of Colt 1911s, and a variety of other lethal weapons. Captain Frank Hamer of the Texas Rangers had the Monitor (serial number C-103168) that was allegedly presented to him by the Colt Company. The gang never had a chance to use their weapons because they were "cut down" before they could react.

Description of the Monitor

The basic receiver is identical to the



Right: Detailed drawing of the Colt Monitor BAR.



Left: A torch-cut Colt Monitor.
Photo Courtesy Kent Lomont.

Model 1918 BAR and Colt Commercial 1919 BAR. There the similarity ends. The stocks, barrel, sights, and compensator were unique to the R-80/Monitor. The barrel, along with its gas tube and operating rod is unlike the Model 1919. They are specific to the Monitor being much shorter to accommodate the 18-inch tube.

The Cutts compensator is unlike any other made. John Appleton, a noted archivist, speculated that Lyman designed it especially for the FBI. However, no documentation could be found to support this. Mr. Appleton has done extensive research on the Cutts Compensator and stated that in the 1920s R.M. Cutts, Sr. did experimental work for the United States Navy

on the West Coast. He further states that Cutts had fitted his compensator to every weapon in the Navy inventory including the Benet-Mercie and the Stokes Mortar. The latter must have been one humongous attachment. The foregrip is fabricated from an R-75 grip but the grooves for a bipod have been filled in with a walnut insert. The buttstock is cut differently from the 1918 BAR. The pistol grip on the stock has been eliminated, as it is actually part of the trigger housing.

Firing Test

This grand experience took place at Knob Creek on Friday, April 12, 1996. This

author was able to put 300 rounds through a pristine Monitor (serial number C-102823) owned by John Scott of Clinton, Indiana. The balance of the rifle was superb which contributed to its remarkable controllability. The cyclic rate was approximately 550 rounds per minute. No stoppages occurred and the firing was an unforgettable experience. The Lyman compensator provided the only negative. Although the gun did not climb one iota, bits of unburned powder were felt on my face and some bystanders complained about the unpleasant blast from both sides of the muzzle. Nevertheless, it performed like a rifle, well balanced and light to handle.

The Odyssey of a Monitor

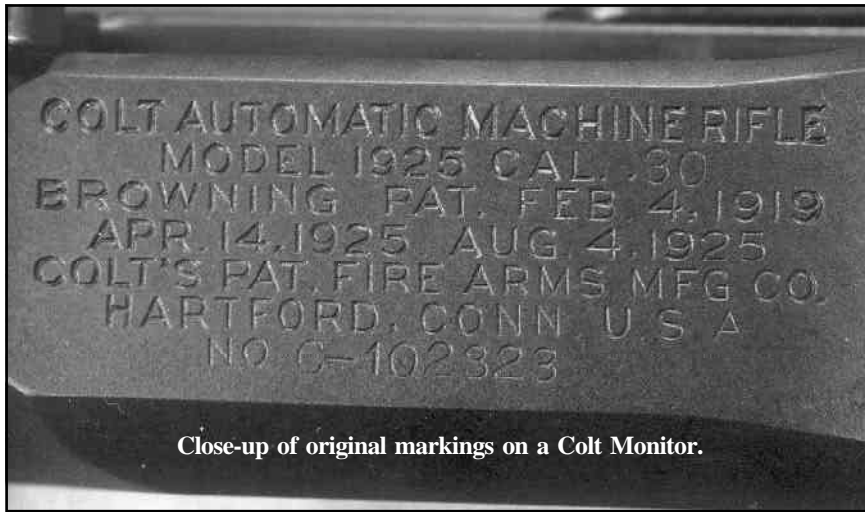
The Monitors sent to Charlestown Prison served as a formidable deterrent to would be troublesome prisoners until the closing of the facility. The rifles then disappeared. Unbeknownst at the time, some of the guards actually had taken them home. One day Lt. Carl M. Majeskey of the Massachusetts State Police was working in the Firearms Identification Lab in Boston. Detective Paul Cloren of the Cambridge Police Department presented Carl a rather rare weapon for the State Police reference collection. It was one of the Monitors. Apparently, Det. Cloren was one of the prison guards who had taken the Monitor home in the 60's.

The story of the Monitor has taken on a certain mystery. Exactly whom was this developed for, who used it and where did

they all go? Other proposed users for the Monitor, according to Tom Swearingen, were the US Marine Corps, First Parachute Division, the First Ranger Battalion and bank and prison guards. Information has recently been received stating that the Argentine Army had some Monitors chambered in 7.65mm.



Left: An original Colt Monitor brochure.
Courtesy John Scott.



Close-up of original markings on a Colt Monitor.

Colt Monitor Specifications

<u>Total Weight of Rifle:</u>	16 pounds, 3 ounces.
<u>Weight of Filled Magazine:</u>	1 pound, 10 ounces.
<u>Weight of Compensator:</u>	11 ounces.
<u>Length of Barrel:</u>	18 inches.
<u>Length of Rifle:</u>	38 1/2 inches.
	With Compensator, 42 1/2 inches.
<u>Caliber:</u>	.30-06 Metal Cased Government Rifle Cartridge.
<u>Cyclic Rate of Fire:</u>	500 shots per minute.
<u>Aimed shots per minute:</u>	Semi-automatic, 60.

The following Spare Parts and Accessories were furnished with each Colt Monitor

SPARE PARTS

2 Extractors	6 Extra Magazines
2 Extractor Springs	1 Magazine Catch
1 Ejector	1 Magazine Catch Pin
1 Recoil Spring	2 Magazine Catch Springs
2 Firing Pins	1 Gas Cylinder Tube Retaining Pin
1 Sear Spring	1 Trigger Pin
1 Bolt Guide Spring	1 Trigger Guard Retaining Pin
1 Connector	1 Recoil Spring Rod

ACCESSORIES

1 Magazine Belt to hold six Magazines and Accessory Case	1 Cleaning Rod
1 Leather Accessory Case	1 Package Cleaning Patches
1 Magazine Filler	1 Combination Tool
1 Oil Can	



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