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Springfield armory M6

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- Gear reviews and tests - Emergency and survival -



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Springfield armory M6 .22 and .410 survival rifle.

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One gun has intrigued me for about as long as I knew of its existence: the Springfield M6 Scout. And the best chamberings for this lovely little combo gun, at least as far as I was concerned, are .22 Long Rifle over the .410 bore shotgun barrel. The M6 is also available in other rifle calibers such as .22 Magnum and .22 Hornet. I prefer the .22lr chambering for the simple fact that it's a very efficient, inexpensive caliber that will more than suffice for small game hunting and foraging duties. Also, it's a cheap enough and versatile enough caliber that one can plink as well as hunt with the same rifle; all you have to do is choose the appropriate ammunition and away you go.

But as nice as the M6 is, and despite the fact that it was designed from the ground up as a survival arm for U.S. pilots, there were a few modifications to be made that would allow it to be even more versatile and better suited to survival. Those modifications are the subject of this article.



The first thing that caught my eye, so to speak, was the peep sight that comes standard on the M6. Peep sights have long been recognized as allowing a superior level of effectiveness on longarms due to fact that they are much faster to acquire a sight picture with. They also naturally align the eye, putting the front post in the centre of the ring and

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making it that much easier for the shooter to get off a faster, more accurate shot. All one has to do in order to use a peep sight is look through it, align the front post on the target, and pull the trigger. The circle of the peep will automatically centre itself in your eye.

All of the above presupposes that the rear peep is large enough to allow plenty of light through, and make it easy to pick up the front sight and the target. Here the original peep was a little disappointing, as it was slightly too small for optimum accuracy and speed. This was easily solved with a 7/64" drill bit and drill. By aligning the bit in the peep's hole, I just drilled it out slightly larger and solved the problem. Some people may find the original peep more than adequate, so it's best to take your M6 to the range and fire it before doing anything so drastic as drilling out the sight. And I see no reason why one would need to get the hole any larger than 7/64". After making this modification I found that not only was it easier to acquire targets, my groups tightened up by a good margin. Also, by being very careful to use the original peep's hole as the centre of the new, larger, hole the rifle will still shot to the same POA.

The only other modification I made to the rifle's issued sights was to paint the front sight post at the very tip with red nail polish. With a stainless sight post, it's sometimes hard to get a good sight picture due to glare, and the red nail polish removes that possibility. It also acts as an easy to see "bead" that shows up nicely against dark backgrounds in low light shooting situations. I always have a bottle of the brightest, reddest, nail polish I can find on hand for projects like this.

Now that the gun was easier to shoot, I wished to make it easier to handle as well, especially in the woods and away from the range. This entailed wrapping the forend in approximately fifteen feet of green paracord. Actually, I did a double wrap so that there are two layers of paracord forming the rifle's forearm. This protects the shooter's hand from the heat of the barrels, and also provides a source of cordage in the field. It also improves the looks somewhat, giving the rifle a more "finished" look.

As any rifle is often carried more that it is shot, I wished to install a sling on my new rifle. I had a hard time finding the proper accessories for my M6, so I made my sling and swivels myself. The sling I made from a long piece of one inch tubular nylon; I sewed a snap hook on either end of the webbing, and put a plastic slide on it to allow length adjustments. The hard part was finding a way to affix the sling to the rifle, as there was no way to use standard sling swivels. I solved that by using a pair of split rings, the same as those used for key rings. I attached the front split ring to a small hole under the front barrel block. The rear ring I threaded through the rearmost trapezoidal slot in the buttstock. Then all that was needed was to snap the sling hooks in place and the sling was mounted.

One of the really nice features of the M6 is the fact that it's a takedown rifle. By removing one pin it's possible to easily split the rifle in two, separating the buttstock/receiver unit from the barrels. This makes it much easier to stow the rifle in either a backpack or any small cubbyhole aboard a plane, boat or car. Springfield sells a couple of nice little cases that hold the taken down rifle; I plan to buy one soon.

The only problem with the takedown pin is that it isn't secured all that well, since it just uses a ball detent to hold the pin in place. This works well enough when the rifle is together, so long as one remembers to check it for looseness every once in a while. But when the rifle is apart the pin can be easily lost, as the ball detent no longer has a strong grip on it. I replaced the original takedown pin with a bolt of the same diameter, but a bit longer. To insure that I could take the rifle down in the field, without tools, I used a wing nut in lieu of a standard nut. I also used a pair of washers on each side of the bolt to prevent scratching the receiver. The washers also keep the bolt from rattling when in place. It's still quick and easy to take the rifle down, and I don't need to worry about losing the pin. As a precaution I placed the original takedown pin in the forearm wrap so that if I do somehow lose the bolt, I can still assemble and fire the rifle.



Another really nice feature on the M6 is the onboard ammo storage. Since this was originally designed as a military survival weapon, it was deemed necessary to keep a small amount of ammo on the weapon at all times. This way if the downed flier was only able to grab his weapon in a dire circumstance, he would have at least a few rounds with it. The .22lr version holds 15 rounds of .22 and four rounds of .410 in an ammo compartment under the buttstock's comb. This is accessed by lifting the rubber-covered comb after pressing the button on the side that holds it closed, thereby preventing loss of the ammo. I keep 3 rounds of CCI Velocitor, 4 rounds of Federal's bulk pack HP's, 3 Remington subsonic HP's, and 5 rounds of S&B high velocity Shorts in the ammo compartment.

The four holes slated for storage of .410 are used to hold 2 rounds of Remington 2.5 inch slugs, and 2 empty .410 hulls containing survival gear. I'll get to this a bit later.

Since I had used 2 spaces of my .410 storage for survival goodies, and the fact that I didn't consider even four rounds of .410 sufficient, I decided to add more .410 storage. The easiest way to store ammo on any rifle is with a buttstock shell caddy or pouch. Of course, were I to use something along those lines it would be much harder to get into the ammo compartment, as the straps holding the buttstock ammo carrier in place would go over the rifle's comb.



Instead of a full-on shell caddy with straps, I simply took a set of webbing loops originally designed to hold 6 rounds of .357 ammo and epoxied it onto the buttstock of my rifle. This shell holder had been made for belt carry, but I simply removed the belt loops that would hold it in place, leaving a flat surface for gluing. I made sure that this was a good, quality piece of gear, as it would be very hard to remove it should it not last. Now I have an additional six rounds of .410 carried on the rifle at all times, and they're even easier to access than the onboard ammo carrier. I keep 1 round of buckshot, 1 of slug and 2 each of #4 and #6 3 inch shells in this shell holder.

The rifle was now set up well for its intended purpose of foraging small game and general plinking, but it did need a little something extra to add to its overall utility as a "survival" arm. This little something extra was an onboard survival kit, just as the gun was set up from the factory to carry spare ammo. After all, if it's a good idea to have ammo handy for a "grab it and go" situation, how much more convenient would it be to have some survival goodies also along for the ride?



To this end I started by attaching my REKAT Utility Knife (RUK hereafter) to the sling. After all, a knife is even more imperative to have on hand when things turn ugly than even a rifle. I used the factory Kydex sheath, but instead of the "J" clip the sheath had originally come with I used a small Tec-Loc which allowed me to attach the knife in a most handy fashion. I mounted the knife so that it was in line with the sling, and wouldn't move and slide all over the place while carrying the gun. I did this by closing the Tec-Loc over the plastic slider that controls sling length. Tec-Locs are a great invention and make thermoplastic sheaths that much more indispensable, and it was especially handy in this instance. The RUK is a great knife for this application, as it's small enough to not be noticed until its drop pointed blade is needed to clean dinner downed with the M6.

Other survival imperatives are fire and a means to procure food. Certainly the M6 is more than capable of putting a

bunny or bird in the pot, but fishing gear is another very worthwhile bit of kit. I used an empty .410 hull to carry a small fishing kit consisting of: 5 small hooks, 10 small split shot weights, 2 needles for emergency repair of clothing or gear, and one rubber jig body for an artificial bait. Another important means of acquiring calories in the wild is via snares, so I wrapped a piece of snare wire long enough to improvise two snares around the bases of the .410 hulls holding my mini-kit.

If I needed to use this kit I could unwind the paracord wrap from the forearm of the gun and use the inner strands for fishing line, sewing thread or even a makeshift snare line by braiding three pieces of it together for strength; by using the paracord in this fashion I can make the small length of snare wire (actually USGI tripwire) go further. When you have a limited amount of space to work with it's imperative that all your gear be well thought out and have as many alternative uses as possible. And string in any fashion is a major survival necessity.

Another necessity of survival, even above knives and cordage, is fire. Fire is what allowed our caveman ancestors to digest their food more effectively, heat their crude cave shelters and improve their simple wooden spears. Fire can keep one alive and even be a companion of sorts to a lonely survivor lost in the wilds. As such one can never have too many methods of fire starting. But given the limited space of an onboard kit, I limited my firemaking tools to 10 Coghlan's "greenhead" water- and windproof matches. As these matches are of the "safety" variety that requires a separate striker panel in order to light, I glued the striker onto the inside of the rifle's comb, where it's accessible yet still protected from the elements. The matches are also kept in an empty .410 hull. To keep my survival gear from falling out, and to provide a bit of waterproofing, I carved a pair of small corks to fit snugly in the .410 cases mouth.

Obviously this is a very small, crude kit, but it would allow a much better chance of survival if it were all one had in addition to the M6 itself. And since most of us always carry a well-stocked kit at all times when in the woods, this could be seen as an addition to our larger kits.

The last item needed for any gun is a way to carry ammo in the field. And while the onboard ammo storage is quite handy, it doesn't change the fact that one needs a way to carry enough rounds for hunting or a possible protracted stay in the bush. To that end I designed and sewed up my own ammo pouch for my M6. It consists of two pouches hanging from a shoulder strap; on the shoulder strap are a small pouch and a six-loop shell carrier. The larger, bottom pouch is a 12 gauge ammo pouch for ALICE gear and is designed to hold twelve rounds of 12 gauge ammo; with a little finagling, one can get fifteen rounds in it. Stuffed to the gills with .410 it carries fifty mixed rounds, most of which are 3 inch field loads but there is also an assortment of slug and buckshot. The smaller pouch above the shotgun pouch used to be for carrying small parts for the 1911 in the field; they have also been used to hold battle dressings and it dates from WW I. Inside this are approximately 175 rounds of mixed .22 ammo; mostly Federal bulk pack HP's but also some CB Long, Remington subsonic HP's and hypervelocity HP's for larger game all of which is kept waterproof in a pellet tin and a 35mm film can. These two pouches are for storage, and the easy to access rounds are kept on the shoulder strap.

On the shoulder strap, the small pouch is actually an Uncle Mike's pouch for .22 ammo and pellets; it holds 150 rounds of .22 mix (same as in the storage pouch) kept in a twisted shut plastic sandwich baggie to keep them dry. The shell loops were originally for a .357, the same as the one I used on the rifle's stock; it holds 4 field loads and one each of buck and slug ready at my fingertips for quick reloads. With the contents of the ammo bag's pouches and the onboard ammo storage, I have 65 rounds of mixed .410 ammo and over 300 rounds of .22. The counts I gave for .22 ammo is a conservative guesstimate, as I haven't actually counted them out, just taken into account how many rounds of .22 ammo I've gotten into similarly sized pouches in the past. So I have enough ammo in this easily carried pouch arrangement to last me quite some time, without having to carry extra ammo in my ruck unless it's for a very long-term stay in the woods. A small cleaning kit is all that's needed to keep this simple gun shooting for a very long time, along with a few minor spare parts which I plan on acquiring soon.

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So whether you're wanting a nice little plinker for your woodswalking trips, or a dedicated foraging piece that would keep you fed and alive for a long time, the M6 is an excellent choice. Toss one, a few spare parts and a cleaning kit in your ruck, car, plane or boat and you've just increased your odds of getting out of the woods healthy and well-fed. Plus, it's just a great gun to plink with.

Post-scriptum :Original article at [OldJimbo's site](#).