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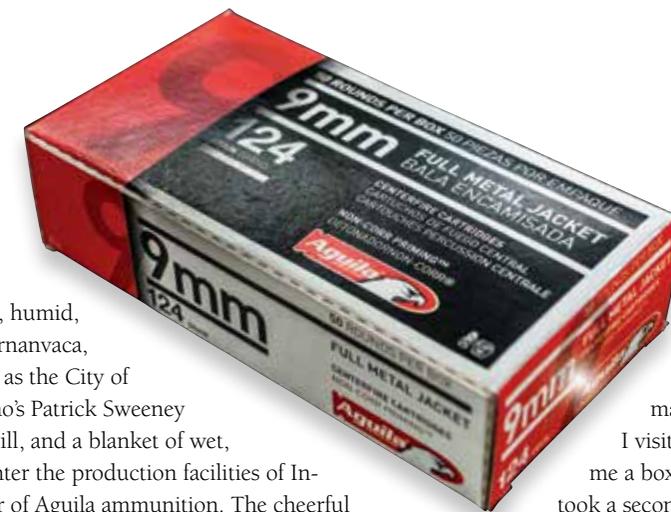
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Hecho en México

Aguila ammunition is about to become more available than ever.

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY ALFREDO RICO



LIKE MOST DAYS, it's a hot, humid, Florida-like afternoon in Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico, also known as the City of Eternal Spring. Guns & Ammo's Patrick Sweeney and I are sweating standing still, and a blanket of wet, warm air clings to us as we enter the production facilities of Industrias Tecnos, manufacturer of Aguila ammunition. The cheerful voice resonating in our earpieces has a timbre and accent reminiscent of Salma Hayek's. The words belong to Yuriko Fuentes, major projects supervisor, who is describing how the large cylinder of lead ingot is extruded into a thick wire and then reduced to the proper caliber size to make a bullet. The plant tour continues throughout the large complex, which produces handgun, rifle and shotgun ammunition of various calibers. With its 53-year history, facility size and new management, Tecnos hopes to make Aguila the largest imported brand of ammunition in the United States.

My first experience with Aguila was when I purchased a variety of .22 Long Rifle ammo from my local gun stores. If you've been looking for rimfire, you know how hard it is to find locally, let

alone in multiple brands. That week, the ammo gods smiled upon me, as I found five different makes of .22LR in the first two shops I visited. When the salesperson handed me a box of Aguila's .22LR Super Extra, I took a second look at the brand. I read and speak Spanish, so I recognized that the Spanish word *Aguila* is translated as "eagle" in English; the eagle-head graphic was a complement to that fact. I became curious about the ammo's origin and flipped over the box. *Hecho* (Made) *en México* was printed on the underside. My interest was piqued since I love to shoot, am an American of Mexican descent and travel to Mexico yearly to visit family. I know that firearms are heavily restricted in Mexico, but I never thought about where the police and military acquire their ammo.

The copper-coated bullets were \$4.50 per 50-round box, making them \$3 less than the next-cheapest ammo and \$17 less than the most expensive loads on the shelf. I wondered how my fin-



Most of Mexico's housing and small businesses are built from brick walls, coated with stucco and then painted, often colorfully. This is an aerial view taken while Rico and Sweeney flew into Mexico City.

icky pistol would handle these loads. At the range, my apprehension quickly subsided, as the pistol effortlessly ate and spit out the Aguila .22s. To top it off, accuracy was almost on par with the best ammo I tested that day. How could such affordable loads exhibit this level of quality? That led me to explore the performance of other Aguila calibers, which ultimately took me south of the border for an inside look at Aguila's Mexico production facility and presented me with the privilege of shooting as much Aguila ammunition as I could endure.

Tecnos had a long history supplying ammunition to the United States. You might be more familiar with it wearing the Remington brand. The ammunition plant was originally set up by Remington in 1961 with a staff of 70 people. If you've shot Remington ammo in the last 30 years, there's a high likelihood that you were shooting ammo manufactured here. Today, Tecnos is Mexico's largest ammunition company and produces in excess of a billion



PHOTO: MICHAEL ANSCHUETZ

Equally ready for wet or dry conditions, Aguila ammunition is waterproof.

cartridges annually. It is the main supplier of ammunition to the Mexican military and law enforcement, and it exports to five continents, supplying ammo to the armed forces in several countries. Today, the ammunition facilities sit on 120 acres with 870 employees working 24 hours a day. The plant includes a lead tower (shotgun pellets are formed using gravity), several ammo production buildings, a shooting range, a ballistics facility, a training range and storage buildings that each house 18 tons of powder. Since thundershowers are common in this area, lightning rods are a must along with weather monitors that serve as an early storm-detection system.

Aguila ammunition meets the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute (SAAMI) and Permanent International Commission for the Proof of Small-Arms (CIP) standards. There are more than 19 different types of .22 Short and .22 Long Rifle cartridges including the 1,700-feet-per-second LR Super Maxi-

The exit hole of the .22 SSS Sniper Subsonic 60 grain.



Above right: The Glock 25 is a popular sidearm for private security firms since they are limited to calibers of .380 or smaller. Mags are loaded with Aguila.

Right: The Minishell is a 12-gauge 1¾-inch shot shell with a slug. These are effective fun in break-action shotguns, producing less felt recoil than standard shells. No, they are not intended for use in semiautos or pumps.



Creed McCaslin, head of TxAT's Training Division, shoots through several mags of Aguila in a new IWI Tavor.

num Solid Point; a quiet, powderless cartridge containing a wee 20-grain bullet called the Calibri; and an SSS Sniper Subsonic that houses a 60-grain lead bullet in a casing half the size of a .22LR. These .22 production facilities are state of the art and produce consistent, Olympic-quality rimfire.

Centerfire handgun calibers include .25, .32, .380, 9mm, .38 Special, .357 Magnum, .40 S&W and .45 ACP. The most common

military rifle calibers are also represented: .223 Remington, .30 Carbine, 5.56 NATO and 7.62 NATO. Shotshell production includes .410 as well as 12, 16, 20 and 28 gauge. One of its unique shotshell innovations is the 12-gauge Minishell. At some point, many of us have

fired a box of this out of curiosity. The shell is 1¾ inches tall and holds a slug. This "Mini Me" shotshell packs a wallop and seems well suited for those who use a shotgun for home defense.

Over the years, Tecnos has continued improving the quality and innovation of Aguila ammunition. In 2011, on the strength of Tecnos' business reputation in Mexico, Houston-based company Texas Armament and Technology (TxAT) was hired to improve the military and law enforcement line of Aguila cartridges. Rodney Taylor, chief manufacturing officer, and Chris Sadler, director of operations, were tasked with putting their boots on the ground. TxAT's success with this part of the project led it to



Left to right: Luis Marentes and Juan Carlos Sanchez, Tecnos International and government sales; Leon Brener, TxAt president; John Domolky, director of sales and marketing; Luis Baiza, Tecnos president.

modernize and optimize the whole line of Aguila ammunition. Just a few of the improvements include severely reducing die changing times, acquiring state-of-the-art .22 manufacturing equipment, providing clear quality-check instructions and installing moisture-sensitive equipment.

In addition to its modernization and optimization role, TxAT is the sole U.S. distributor of Aguila ammunition. What this means to the U.S. market is that we have a direct contact to a company that can respond to our concerns and needs. Since quality is what gives Aguila its competitive edge, TxAT addresses quality issues seriously and directly by reviewing details of a customer's incident and, if it's a valid claim, has the product shipped back for testing in its ballistics lab. "If the claim is deemed legitimate, we go above and beyond to make the issue right with the customer," states John Domolky, director of sales and marketing. Many of the claims are resolved in two weeks or less.

Although it's a great pleasure to see how ammo is manufactured in Mexico and learn how Mexican and American companies are working together to bring shooters in the U.S. more ammo, the visit



TxAT implemented SMED methodology, which increased production running time.

PERFORMANCE (AS TESTED)

FIREARM	BARREL LENGTH (IN.)	BULLET	BULLET WEIGHT (GR.)	AVERAGE VELOCITY (FPS)	SD	ES
Tactical Solutions .22LR Conversion Kit for Glock 17	4.5	.22LR Super Extra	40	957	40	105
Remington Nylon 66	19.5	.22LR	40	1,071	29	72
Smith & Wesson M&P15	14.5	.223	55	2,799	21	54
Ruger LCP	2.75	.380 Auto	95	834	16	47
Kahr CM9	3	9mm	124	938	16	42
Glock 26	3.42	9mm	124	1,006	14	37
Springfield Armory XD ^s	4	9mm	124	1,043	11	24
Glock 17 GEN 4	4.48	9mm	124	1,046	7	21
Beretta PX4 Storm	4	.40 S&W	180	1,009	17	43
Springfield Armory XD Compact	4	.45 Auto	230	761	7	19
Ruger SR1911	5	.45 ACP	230	812	14	32

wouldn't be complete without getting behind the trigger and shooting some Aguila ammo.

Since legal gun ownership in Mexico is highly restricted and controlled by the Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA), legally shooting a firearm is a privilege that few Mexican citizens enjoy. Essentially, firearms and ammunition sales are controlled by SEDENA in the lone gun shop of the country, located in Mexico City. Civilians are restricted to small calibers and have a limitation on the quantity of firearms they are allowed to own. Firearms must stay in the home, with open or concealed carry being illegal for all but the armed forces, police and private security. For shooting sports, firearm transportation permits are required and must be renewed yearly.

At the Tecnos facility, Sweeney and I were encouraged to shoot a variety of handguns and rifles, including several machine guns. The Aguila ammo ran like a perfectly tuned hot rod even in the 9mm carbine set to Auto. The following day, I, Sweeney and a few other guests from the U.S. were offered a quick trip to Acapulco to visit a private shooting range operated by Carlos Peña, president of the Mexican Shooting and Hunting Federation. You can't blame me for accepting the invite. With its beautiful ocean view, the range



Left: Through cartridges such as this Minishell, Aguila seeks to establish itself as an innovative company.

Below: A Browning Medalist .22LR and a Franchi Barrage Trap used at a friendly shooting competition in Acapulco.



Yuriko Fuentes holds the various shot pellets produced at the Aguila plant.

sits among lush green hills and has been host to several prestigious international shooting events. The ranges are set up for trap, skeet, sporting clays and Olympic bunker trap. I shot roughly 200 rounds of Aguila 12-gauge Competition through a Browning GTI over/under shotgun, all without a hiccup.

After leaving the land of the golden eagle and returning to the land of the bald eagle, I was anxious to stock up on what I could find of the Aguila brand. I placed orders for several calibers including .380, .40 S&W, 9mm and .45 ACP. To complete this investigative journey, I performed an informal test using my personal handguns. I know how they perform and which ammo to avoid (generally, the cheap off-brands). I don't know how long it's been since you shot through a box of Aguila, but it

performed extremely well. Often, I do experience poor performance running .380s through my Ruger LCP. To the point of almost

selling it, my LCP acts like a baby being fed peas. I dusted it off for this occasion and loaded it with the Aguila .380. The FMJs turned out to be the entrée that my LCP craved.

I'm happy watching two companies from the two cultures I grew up with work together to produce a product we can all enjoy, but heritage takes a back seat in these pages to price and performance. When buying ammo, I try to achieve a balance of these two traits so I can practice more and get fist-sized groupings at 25 yards for my pistols and 100 yards for

my rifles without concern for reliability. Aguila ammo is achieving this balance. With continued vigilance over quality and price, the Aguila brand is about to become more prevalent than ever in the U.S., and it has the wings to become one of the more popular choices for shooting enthusiasts across both nations. **GA**