

## M1917 Colt Revolver and M1917 Smith & Wesson Revolver



### M1917 Colt



### M1917 Smith & Wesson

As production of the semi-automatic M1911 Colt Pistol was unable to satisfy demand for sidearms to equip the quickly expanding army in 1917, double action, six-shot revolver was speedily developed by two manufacturers, Colt and Smith & Wesson, chambered in the same caliber rimless ammunition intended for the M1911, .45 ACP (Automatic Colt Pistol). More akin to the traditional service revolver the M1911 replaced, these heavy revolvers were

manufactured to supplement the pistol issues along with the iconic automatic. Both revolvers were similar, with left opening hinged cylinders and extractors for spent casings. So the rounds would properly headspace in the bore, and also so the extractor could grip the rimless cartridges for ejection, however, it was necessary to provide “half-moon” clips into which 3 .45 ACP cartridges were loaded. A woven ammunition pouch was provided to carry 18 rounds in 6 clips contained in three pockets. The pistol was carried in a russet leather holster with securing flap fastened on the waistbelt with the ammunition pouch. A lanyard fastened to a ring screwed into the buttplate of the stock.



Pistol belt with revolver (S. & W.) and accoutrements.



Cylinder open to show ejector and half moon clip with cartridges, and cartridge without clip. Half moon clip without cartridges.

Revolvers are traditionally steadier on the aim (if fired single action, cocking the hammer each shot, rather than firing double action). More recovery of aim and sight picture is required when firing double action, as is found from firing repeatedly, semi automatically with the M1911 pistol. The M1911 has the advantage of an extra round in its magazine (7), and the capability of being loaded with 8 total shots from a round being chambered, the safety lock engaged, and then loading a full magazine to feed after the first discharge. M1911s are faster to load and fire (with prepared, loaded magazines at the ready) than the M1917 revolver, with each six shots fired, the empty clips ejected. Two fresh clips of three rounds each can then be loaded rather quickly, but reloading the clips is a slow process, even requiring a special tool to pry the spent casings from the clip. Reloading M1911 magazines is also a slow process, handling each round individually to recharge the magazine. The follower in the magazine must be depressed to coil the magazine spring beneath the magazine. Both pistols are sturdy and of solid construction, and along with trench knives and other improvised weapons of shock, like clubs or brass knuckles, were useful in hand-to-hand combat of the trenches.

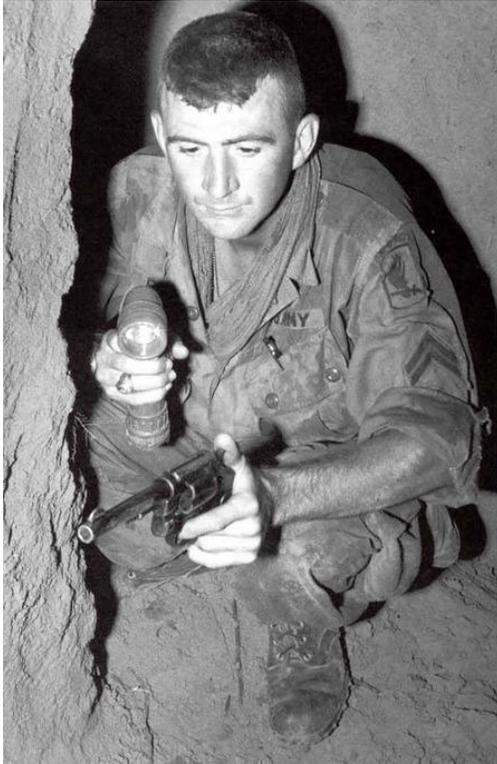




Ejecting spent casings.



Loading fresh half moon clip.



The M1917 was still in use during Vietnam: like in the trenches, soldiers carried either the revolver or the M1911 (or M1911A1), a flashlight, and maybe a gasmask, into the pitch dark of Viet Cong subterranean excavations. The revolver was ideal for the hazardous duty of “tunnel rat.”

**1. Stock (Right Hand).** **2. Hammer.** **3. Frame.** **4. Cylinder.** **5. Ejector Rod.** **6. Barrel.**



**7. Lanyard Ring.** **8. Trigger.** **9. .45 ACP Rimless Cartridges.** **10. Front Sight.**

## Colt

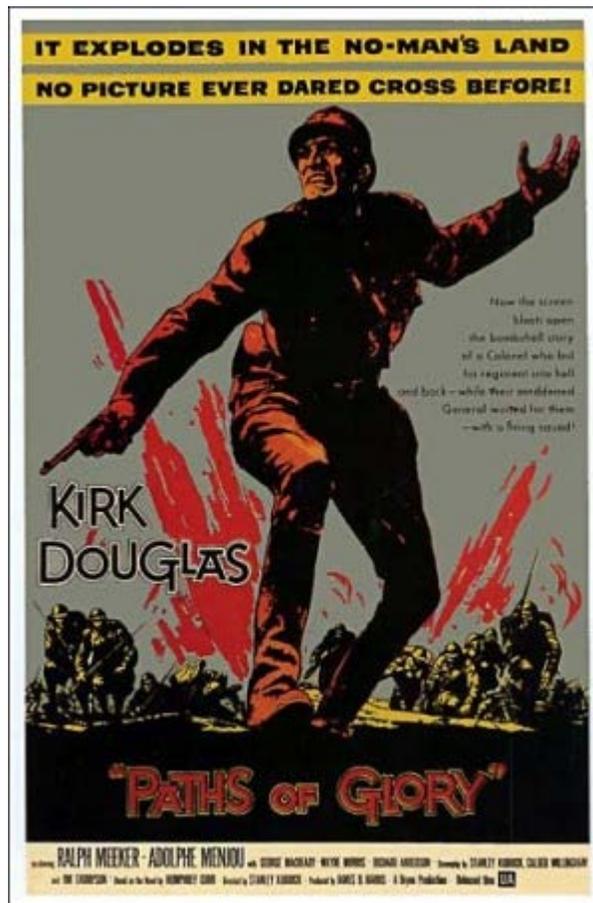


## Smith & Wesson

1. Barrel Lug. 2. Plunger Ejector. 3. Cylinder Release Thumb Piece. 4. Side Piece.



**Hollywood and Firearms: Accuracy in Impression? Not so much.**



*Kubrick's Paths of Glory, 1957*

**Why is Colonel Dax (Kirk Douglas) of the 701<sup>st</sup> Régiment d'Infanterie carrying a M1917 S. & W. in the assault on the "Anthill" (the "Pimple" in Humphrey Cobb's original novel)? As a French colonel, he should carry a Lebel pistol, as do other troops in the film.**



**Corporal Paris (Ralph Meeker) carries the proper French pistol, the 8mm Mle. 1892 Revolver, into no man's land on an ill-fated patrol.**

**A great film (and book, too), but accuracy can be sought and attained, so get it right! Kubrick did succeed in two later films with depictions of battle (and of course, earlier in a third of "nuclear combat toe-to-toe with the Russkies," *Dr. Strangelove*, 1964): *Barry Lyndon*, 1975, for its musketry volleys in the Seven Year's War, and ultimately, in *Full Metal Jacket*, 1987, in the vivid depiction of the Battle of Hué in 1968 Vietnam. Itself a dramatization and adaptation of *The Short-Timers*, 1979, by Gustav Hasford, the film is true to the novel, which is a shockingly raw depiction of Marines in Vietnam.**

