

# **Ransom's Reliable Rest**

## **"Nothing Less Than a Robot - With an Infinite Span of Attention"**

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Chuck Ransom has a perfectly normal arm. It's mounted on a shoulder that has both elbow and wrist joints. As a matter of fact, he has two of these arms, one on the right and one on the left. In this regard, Ransom is like most other humans. Since Ransom is also an experienced and knowledgeable pistol shooter, it isn't surprising that he once used his regular arms to hold different handguns for accuracy testing.

Early on, Ransom found that his regular arms and hands were not the best possible way to hold handguns to determine the accuracy of any gun/ammo combination. No matter how carefully he held the pistol or how much bench support he used, there always were errors created by inconsistent grip and less than perfect sight alignment. Ransom fought that problem for several years. Then he designed a mechanical arm and built it into a device that has come to be a standard of the industry.

The device is called the Ransom Rest, a mechanical contrivance that makes the evaluation of handguns and their ammunition a veritable breeze. Simply stated, this rest holds a handgun in such a way that it will return to the same position for a series of shots. The gun isn't aimed manually, since the rest is attached to an immobile base. In use, the rest holds a particular gun while it is fired. When the gun fires, the rest allows it to recoil upward. Then the human operator pushes it back down to the battery position. In other words, each time the gun is fired in the Ransom Rest, the barrel of the gun will be aimed at the same point on the target.

To an avid pistolero, the device is exceptionally valuable. Assume that you have a pistol of known accuracy, such as the Leckie pin gun pictured here. When you take the gun to a championship match, you'll want to use the best available ammunition. The best way to find out which is best is to try all of the different types that you have available in the gun to be used. The Ransom Rest will, with monotonous regularity, detect what the actual performance of the ammunition will be. It removes the human skill of marksmanship from the equation.

It works the other way also. Assume that you have a large quantity of a particular brand and type of ammunition and you want to find out which of your guns of that caliber will perform best. The Ransom Rest will tell you in short order. Try twenty rounds or so in each gun and the best will print a measurably smaller group.

Despite the heavyweight performance, the Ransom Rest is not particularly heavy or bulky. It must be mounted rigidly in place on a board, which is then C-clamped down to a sturdy table or bench. Alternatively, the Ransom Rest is permanently fixed to some form of solid pillar embedded in the ground. Some gun clubs are using this form of mounting on a removable base. The key to making it work right is to ensure that the Ransom Rest cannot move at all while in use. The instructions which accompany the rest detail the particulars of several mounting systems.

The Ransom Rest consists of a cast, flat-bottomed base and a short, rotating arm. The arm is fitted to the base by means of a sturdy bolt and a whopping big coil spring. The contacting surfaces of the base and arm are machined flat and the spring ensures that there is a friction fit between the two major components. The two major parts of the rest are thus held together under enough spring tension that the arm can only move in an upward arc.

The firearm to be tested fits into what Ransom calls inserts, which are fastened to the recoiling arm of the rest. Inserts are manufactured for a wide variety of handguns and come in pairs for the right and left side of each model of gun. The stocks must be removed from the gun before the inserts will fit. The inserts are plates of aluminum to which a special rubbery polyurethane material is bonded. On the inside of each insert, a molded cavity fits the frame of the handgun. Since the contact surface of the insert is the resilient material, there is no damage to the finish of the handgun. When secured in the inserts, the pistol is cradled in material that serves to keep even collector-grade handguns in pristine condition.

Accompanying photos (*not included in this web page*) show the Leckie pin gun in the process of being fitted to the rest. The sequence calls for the right insert to be fitted over the three mounting rods on the recoiling arm, then the pistol minus grips goes into the insert, followed by the left insert and the outside backing plate. Then the shooter tightens down three star nuts with equal tension on all. The pistol is now cradled in a sandwich of contoured plastic inserts between rigid plates of aluminum. The "sandwich" is firmly bolted to the recoiling arm.

In the process of installing the gun in the inserts, the shooter also aligns the trigger release lever into each trigger guard. Before firing with the rest, the trigger release lever must be adjusted in such a way that it will cleanly depress the trigger when operated. The only remaining task is to adjust the rest for elevation and get it aligned with the target. On the front-most end of the recoiling arm, there is a screw mechanism that allows changes in the angle at which the gun is aimed when the rest is pushed back into battery. Changing the screw adjustment changes the vertical placement of the group on the target.

With all the foregoing steps performed and all clamping screws down tight, the shooter can get back to work. Several rounds need to be fired through the gun, in order to settle the handgun into a familiar fit in the inserts. After this is done, the star nuts need to be re-tightened to be sure there is no slop in the system.

When actual accuracy testing begins, the routine is straightforward. Both revolvers and automatics are loaded and fired as repeaters in the Ransom Rest. There's enough of the frame of any revolver showing above the insert that it can be loaded as normal. Automatics will feed from the magazine, which is inserted through the bottom of the insert as shown.

In use, the shooter fires a shot by tripping the trigger release lever. The pistol will recoil upward in an arc. The shooter then pushes the entire arm back into battery and fires another shot. Once the system is set up and functioning, the shooting progresses quite rapidly and the shooter finds himself punching out ten-shot groups in quick order. Because of the way the rest is designed and the way the pistol is fitted into it, the Ransom Rest will return the gun to the same position shot after shot - after shot.

Some critics of the Ransom Rest contend that they can shoot hand-held groups that are just as good. Perhaps they can, but not for an entire day of test firing. No matter how good they are, sooner or later their attention will wander and they will make a mistake and commit a marksmanship error - inconsistent grip, misaligned sights, trigger jerk, or the like.

Properly operated, the Ransom Rest does none of these things. It performs with monotonous, almost robotic, regularity. In this regard, you could say that the Ransom Rest has an infinite span of attention. But the device does have to be operated properly. Several common operator errors can contribute to less-than-perfect performance. One of them is handling the gun after it is settled into the inserts. Don't touch the handgun any more than is necessary to load it. Autos are particularly easy to manage in this regard. If the gun is handled - the test results may be flawed, because the fit of the gun to the inserts will be changed. Ransom puts a ledge on the arm to use in pressing the arm back down to battery. Use it faithfully.

It also follows that the arm should be lifted without touching the gun when it is necessary to insert a new magazine in an autoloader.

Next, when testing an auto, don't depress the slide stop and chamber the first round from a new magazine when the arm has already been returned to battery. The entire arm may bounce off the indexing point and the result will be a shot out of the group. The last step before firing each shot should be to make sure the elevation screw is in firm contact with the indexing point on the base of the rest. It's also wise to make sure the lock screw on the elevation adjustment is tight.

Fire settling shots every time that a gun is placed into the inserts. This has the beneficial effect of snuggling the gun down into the rubbery blue stuff that Chuck Ransom uses to make the inserts. Ransom also contends that you will get better results in ammo testing if you fire settling *and* fouling shots with each load.

The Ransom Rest is a precise tool that must be operated carefully and consistently. Results obtained are exceptionally valuable to the handgunner in that they answer, in

about a definitive a way as you can find, the burning question, "How well does it *really* shoot?"

The current price of the Ransom Rest with one set of inserts is \$289.00. An optional, additional Windage Base allows the rest to be adjusted for windage as well as the elevation built into the system. It costs \$164.00, and you will find yourself wanting one of them in short order. Inserts are priced from \$39.00 per set, and they are made for several dozen different guns. If they aren't available for your pet handgun, Ransom will sell you a blank set with instructions on how to cut them for your gun. Inquiries should be addressed to Ransom International, Box 3845, Prescott, AZ 86301.

The Ransom Rest costs less than a single high-quality handgun. If you are a competitive shooter of almost any sort, you need to have access to one. In lots of cases, Chuck Ransom reports that several shooters jointly purchase one. Sometimes, the local gun club treasury can pop for one, but Ransom remains cheerfully willing to send you one of your very own.

What he sells is a quality piece of equipment that both myself and managing editor Dean Grennell routinely use and recommend. It's sort of a pistolero's lie detector.