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# Aimpoint®

## A CUT ABOVE

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### **The Gordon Carbine**

Pinnacle of AR clone builds

### **Micro**

The tiny optic that changed the world

### **ACRO Evolution**

From pistols to long guns, the ACRO has you covered



# LIGHTER & SMALLER

**A**t the 2007 SHOT Show in Orlando, Florida, I was working for LaRue Tactical, an optics-mount manufacturer and supplier of Aimpoint products. Before the show opened, Aimpoint's John Enloe brought me to the Aimpoint booth to show off the new Micro. Little did I know that this optic would change everything.

**Here's the Aimpoint Micro story.**

**By Mark Fingar**





LIGHTER & SMALLER



EARLY PROTOTYPE

During a recent visit to Aimpoint in Manassas, Virginia, I sat down with John Enloe, Aimpoint USA’s technical support manager, to reminisce on the little optic that’s made such a huge impact in the shooting world.

The Birth of a Legend

According to Enloe, Aimpoint USA received the first prototypes of the Micro in the summer of 2006. Initially, the Micro was intended for submachineguns, PDWs, the occasional shotgun, and maybe a pistol or two. During testing, the Micro was added to every practical application they could conceive.

“With the exception of height, it worked well on every platform,” said Enloe. “For the height issue, we reached out to the mount industry.”

Enloe tested prototypes on many firearms, even an M1A and FN FAL, but on firearms like an AR-15, the factory mount was too low for a proper cheekweld. Occasionally, Enloe would contact the home office in Sweden and give feedback, but at the time, there was a lot more focus on the CompM4. Still, Enloe kept exploring options. It was the calm before the storm.

At SHOT Show 2007, Aimpoint’s plan was to promote the CompM4, but CEO Lennart Ljungfelt surprised everyone by arriving with samples of the Micro T-1, H-1, and R-1. Compared to open-emitter sights available at

the time, the Micro’s was closed, ruggedized, and waterproof. I received an early sample for testing. After almost 18 years, serial #P0009 is still in excellent condition. Other than to change a battery once, the unit has never been turned off.

Despite its massive popularity, the Micro wasn’t immediately embraced. According to Enloe, shooters thought it was too small.

“At SHOT 2007, I showed the Micro to some of the best shooters in the world,” said Enloe. “I’m talking Jerry Miculek, Taran Butler, guys on that level. I got resistance from all of them. I would hear things like, ‘We’ll never find that little dot in that little window’ or ‘It’s too small’ or ‘It’s going to break.’”



Testing an early prototype on an FN FAL rifle in the fall of 2006.

At the time, red dots on pistols were rare because they had a reputation for being fragile. Many shooters thought a slide-mounted Micro would break. Enloe remembers people saying, “That’ll never take off” or “That’s kind of chintzy.” Then, as the first street samples were getting tested, used, and abused, the Micro began to get real-world feedback. According to Enloe, doubts about the Micro’s durability went away quickly.

“People reported the Micro surviving all sorts of applications,” said Enloe. “Instead of questioning the Micro, they began saying, ‘This thing is actually pretty damn tough.’”

Early on, certain unnamed members of our armed forces had also been thoroughly testing the Micro on everything they could. They were sold on the optic, but the original mount was too low. To use it on an M4 or similar platform, a riser or aftermarket replacement mount was needed. To solve this, Aimpoint provided the drawings of the footprint to trusted manufacturers who had signed NDAs. The mount race had begun.

As mount designs began to appear, the height of the Micro in relationship to AR-15 iron sights soon became a hot topic. In July 2007, LaRue Tactical announced three quick-disconnect mounts: a tall “lower one-third cowitness” for AR-15s, an HK416 version, and a low-profile version. LaRue’s lower one-third mount became the standard, allowing users to see over the front sight tower.



During SHOT Show 2007, the world got a peak at the first three micros: The T-1, the H-1, and the R-1.

Once a variety of mounts were available, people began putting Micros on everything with a rail. The versatility of the optic was limited only by creativity. Most importantly, the number of satisfied customers was growing by the day.

THE MICRO TOOK OFF

According to Enloe, not only was the Micro proving to be tough as nails, but its diminutive size became its biggest strength.

“It’s always good to have less material between the shooter and the target, specifically the peripheral view of the target,” said Enloe.

With both eyes open and the target in focus, the Micro’s housing seems to disappear. This makes the Micro intuitive and fast to use. Smaller also means lighter, which results in the Micro weighing 6.5 ounces less than the CompM4.

When Magpul Dynamics released the “Art of the Tactical Carbine” and “Art of the Tactical Carbine 2” videos, carbine classes were at the height of popularity, and shooters hung on the instructor’s every word. Travis Haley and Chris Costa took full advantage

of the Micro’s small profile and low weight while shooting around, underneath, and over barricades. They made it look easy, and people wanted everything they were using. After those videos, Micro sales took off.

There were also the famous Freddie Blish demonstrations. The retired Marine Corps lieutenant colonel would visit carbine classes across the country, gather students, and start by shooting a group on paper. He would then remove the Micro, hand it to one of the students, and tell them to throw it across the parking lot. After it bounced on the gravel, Blish would run over to retrieve it, often throwing it back. Next, he would put it back on the carbine and fire into the same group. Blish would turn to the crowd and say, “Now, do that with your optic.”

Over a couple of years, Blish’s Micro looked like it had been tumbled in a food processor, but it continued to work — every time. Blish would say, “Chicks love scars.” That famous optic is still working and now resides at Aimpoint’s home office in Sweden.

The T-1, H-1, and R-1

The T-1 Micro is essentially a CompM4 scaled to half size. At just 3 ounces, it’s a true feat of engineering. Without the mount, the T-1 Micro measures only 2.1 inches long and

Several Magpul Dynamics videos featured the Micro, catapulting it into popularity.





# LIGHTER & SMALLER

With the introduction of the first three LaRue Tactical quick-disconnect mounts, the Micro was able to be mounted on a wider range of weapon platforms.



just 1.5 inches tall. The housing is hardcoat anodized high-strength aluminum alloy with a 12-position brightness dial on the right side (four night vision, eight daylight). The brightness dial also houses a slim CR2032 lithium battery with a life of over five years of continuous use (at level eight). The T-1 is rated to an impressive 25 meters (80 feet) underwater.

The aiming dot is a precise, parallax-free collimated reflection off a slightly angled front lens that originates at the rear of the sight via an offset LED emitter attached to an internal tube. The internal tube is mechanically attached to the external windage and elevation adjustment turrets. Each turret has a waterproof cap, with two pegs that interface with



the turrets, allowing users to move the dot with audible clicks. When zeroing, each click moves the dot .50 inch at 100 yards. Markings engraved on the inside of the cap aid in direction of desired movement.

If you look at any front lens on an Aimpoint, you'll see that it's slightly angled. This is to align it with the emitter. The ruby-colored "bandpass coating" on the front lens selectively limits unwanted frequencies of light to provide clarity, contrast, and excellent night vision device compatibility. The glass surfaces also have an "anti-reflex" or anti-reflective coating to minimize unwanted reflections.

Even though the Micro shares the same 2-MOA emitter as the CompM4, there's a direct correlation between dot size and the distance between the LED and the lens. The shorter the distance, the larger the dot appears. Because the Micro is half the length of the CompM4, the first Micros ended up with 4-MOA dots.

The Micro H-1 is physically the same size and general build as a T-1 and is an excellent choice for hunters or recreational shooters who don't need night vision capability or an extreme waterproof depth rating. The H-1 is submersible to 5 meters (15 feet) and can still be used with night vision with the lowest brightness settings or an external illuminator. The early H-1s had a gloss black hardcoat anodizing with a white logo. Current models are matte black. Aside from that, they are the same as the T-1.

Micro H-1



Micro R-1



Micro T-1



The Micro R-1 had the same specifications as the H-1 but was hardcoat anodized silver. The "R" stands for revolver and was ultimately phased out. They still show up online from time to time.

## Magnifiers and the Need for the T-2

The first Aimpoint 3X magnifier, the 3XMag, was announced in 2005. A magnifier is a clip-on accessory that turns a 1X red-dot optic into a magnified scope. The Aimpoint 3XMag quickly proved to be magic when mounted behind Aimpoint's CompM2 and M3 with the popular LaRue pivoting mount. This mount allowed the optic to swing out of the way when not

needed or lock back into place when extra magnification is desired.

The housing was waterproof, ruggedized, and overmolded with thick rubber. The glass was clear, the field of view superior, and the eye relief generous. Aimpoint magnifiers were also the first to add windage and elevation control that allowed the precise centering of the dot. This adjustment is huge; if the mount is not perfectly square, the dot will not be centered. The Aimpoint 3XMag was a resounding success.

Magnification exposed an issue with the T-1 Micro. When using a magnification beyond 3X, you'll get a slight distortion of the dot. It's still usable but annoying to discriminating



LIGHTER & SMALLER



The Micro H-2 and T-2 were designed to be more rugged and feature a smaller 2-MOA reticle.



the dot with a compass,” said Enloe. “The 6X power was extremely tight as well. From the prone, rapid fire, I was easily making 400-yard shots on a steel popper.”

Additionally, there was extra material added around the T-2 turrets to protect from bumps. The vulnerable top turret cover was replaced with one that tightens down with a coin, while the less vulnerable side covers kept the two-peg profile of the T-1. The front and rear lenses received a rim to attach captive pop-up covers. The T-2 also upgraded the mount interface with durable helicoil inserts. Now, if a user strips the threads, they’ll have a better chance of repair versus the T-1’s direct threads.

The new H-2 carried over all the new features of the T-2, except for the night vision brightness settings and water depth rating. Aimpoint also got rid of the glossy finish and went with a matte black instead but kept the “H” version’s white logo.

The 2-MOA dot was a success. Two years later, Aimpoint announced their new magnifiers to the public, the 6XMag-1 and 3XMag-1. These new magnifiers featured the addition of a variable diopter ring, so users could take full advantage of the T-2’s sharpness.

Night Vision Compatibility

A weapon-mounted PVS-14 behind the Micro is a treat. Because the narrow focus plane is out at the target, the closer-in Micro’s housing almost completely disappears, leaving a dot



The reinforced upper turret keeps the delicate elevation knob safe from damage.



The T-2 and H-2 both have distinctive flip-up lens covers.

The T-2 and H-2

Aimpoint announced the Micro T-2 in late 2013. The body was redesigned, and the T-2 had a much-anticipated 2-MOA reticle that worked beautifully with Aimpoint’s 3X magnifier. According to Enloe, the 2-MOA dot was a huge challenge but necessary for use with the 6X magnifier.

“We had to make a 1-MOA LED to produce the 2-MOA Micro,” said Enloe. “At that time, we didn’t want to do it. It was cost-prohibitive. We also felt there was no market for it because

the Micro was a close-range PDW optic.”

Certain members of the warfighting community insisted. They wanted to pair it with an Aimpoint magnifier, and they wouldn’t take no for an answer. The new T-2 solved magnifier distortion issues by using a slightly longer body and steeper angle to the front lens.

Aimpoint logged almost two years of R&D to get the optimum angle and shape of the front lens.

“When completed, we put a 3X power behind it, and it looked like somebody drew



The 6 Second Mount from Geissele/ALG was essentially a wrap-around structure that locked onto the frame and light rail, suspending the optic above the slide, forward of the ejection port. This was a short-lived project once everyone began milling slides and making plate adapters, but it was a unique application for the Micro.

“They called it the six second gun because it was only for engagements that were supposed to last six seconds,” said Enloe.

Going Forward

What does the future hold for the T-2? According to Enloe, there’s no plans for a T-3.

“The M-5 is close to what a T-3 would be,” said Enloe, “But it’s different enough to merit its own space. For now, Aimpoint is offering Micro combination packages and mount options. They’re also available in different colors like FDE or blaze orange made popular by hunters.”

Speaking of hunters, the Micro S-1 was made specifically for shotguns. It mounts low on the rib and has a 6-MOA dot for fast acquisition. Since the S-1 sits almost at the same height as the bead, it is intuitive to use and demonstrates just how versatile the mighty Micro has become.

Since its launch in 2007, there have been dozens of copycats following the same principle of “smaller and lighter,” but the gold-standard has been the Aimpoint Micro. I believe it will be this way for a long time. •

that looks suspended in space. Both the T-1 and T-2 have four night vision brightness settings that ensure the dot remains sharp and visible in darkness. The ruby-colored band-pass coating on the front lens does a great job of reflecting select frequencies of incoming red light, allowing nearly 100 percent of the infrared and near-infrared spectrum used by night vision. This results in spectacular contrast and clarity and maximum target brightness.

My favorite mounting method is a LaRue LT660 mount on the Micro and an LT755 pivot mount for a PVS-14. When not using night vision, it can be rotated to the side, keeping it on the rifle. Users can also use helmet-mounted night vision with great success.

Popularity on Pistols

Over the years, people have used Micros on all sorts of pistols, but since the mounting method is from underneath, it has limitations. Because of this, the majority of USPSA and competitive shooters have gravitated toward



Aimpoint added helicoils into the T-2/H-2’s baseplate. This added strength and prevented damage when customers installed their own mounts.

lighter Aimpoint options that mount directly onto a slide via a plate, like the ACRO. Still, a few people showed their creativity and took advantage of the Micro’s indestructible nature.

Enloe said one customer used a custom mount to run Micros on .500 Smith & Wesson Magnums. “It survived an amazing amount of abuse,” he said. “The topstrap of the revolver flexes under recoil every time the gun is fired, and the mount flexes too. There’s a brutal amount of power and recoil, but none of the Micros had problems.”