

SPARES

Saving the day...

February 2019

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GLEN ZEDIKER

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If you're a "serious" AR15 user, parts replacements are, not may be, in your future. Here's a few you should keep on hand. There's little worse than ordering a 50-cent part and paying \$7.00 for shipping and then not getting it until next week...



AR15s aren't what I'd call (really) high-maintenance, but if you're a hard user there's bound to be a need for a few parts replacements and function repairs. Parts wear, parts break, and somewhere in between those related to each is that parts diminish in function (they work, but not well).

As a competitive shooter I likely have a more paranoid viewpoint on what's a "reasonable" fix-it kit to keep handy. I didn't want to be sidelined or scrounge around all McGyver-like getting my gun back running after traveling to an overnight event. There are other venues where reliability is paramount, and it's between wise and imperative to have the capacity to restore function.

Next up are a few select parts and assemblies I suggest keeping at the ready to solve most commonly-likely breakage-related issues.

SPARE BCG

The very best spare is a complete bolt carrier assembly! I pack one along for each tournament event and ammo testing session. This assembly has to have been tested for both function and zero. While it might seem like an extravagance, having a complete carrier assembly will, right quick-like and in a hurry, replace most parts most likely to be malfunctioning in the course of firing. If that's too much of an either real or perceived extravagance, then a tested complete bolt assembly saves most days from ending early. A firing pin is easy enough to tote along. I have ruined a few of those during ammo testing sessions (pierced primers; the flame will burn the metal, leaving the pin tip jagged).



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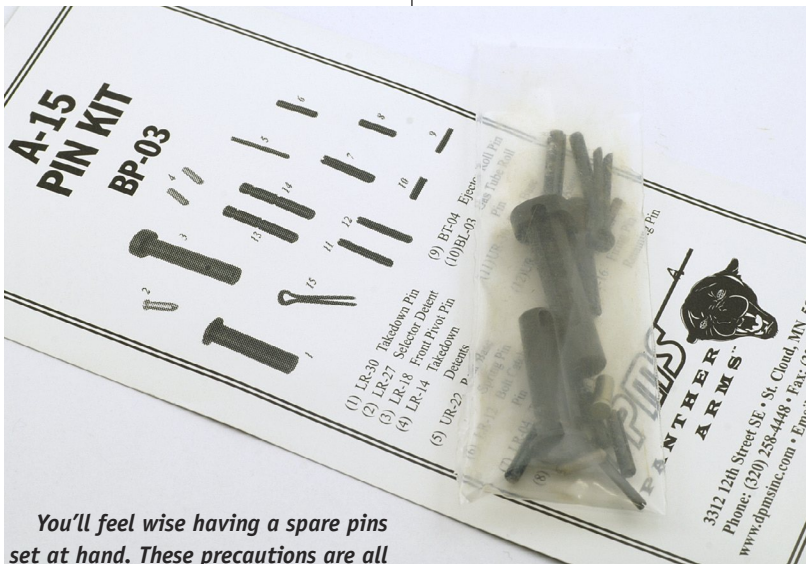
ON-THE-SPOT MAINTENANCE



It might be a more costly solution, but it is a solution. A tested, complete bolt carrier assembly means an amazingly quick repair to most anything that can likely go wrong with your AR15 in the field.

willing to tote along, so the remainder of this here will now focus on what's waiting back at home.

SHOP SPARES



You'll feel wise having a spare pins set at hand. These precautions are all like fire extinguishers: you probably won't ever use it, but it's invaluable if you need it. Spare parts are insurance.

Any field repair kit really has also to include some means for lubrication and cleaning: a shop rag and small can of aerosol-wunder-oil lets you spritz away the grit. I use a fishing tackle box to carry my tools and spares, and cleaning gear, to the range. Cleaning rod can go along with you encased in a PVC contraction easy to assemble from parts found at your local building supply store.

The level and nature of repairs you might be able to perform out in the field or on a tailgate will depend on the tools and, of course, parts, that you're

If you work on AR15s much (as little as once...), doing parts replacements and such as that, it's easily possible lose or damage roll pins and springs. Some springs in particular are delicate with respect to kinking. Some are also under a lot of pressure, like the ejector spring, which is also likewise prone to breakage.

Keep a roll pin set handy, and, of course all the suitable punches. Gas tube pins, especially, are easy to mess up. Polishing up the end of a pin (chuck it in an electric drill and spin it on an oiled stone or emery paper piece) and the use of a capture or "slave" punch to guide the pin through, are the best helps. When you trash a pin it's almost always be-

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"Springs and rings..." The most commonly malfunctioning parts are pretty much associated with the bolt: ejector and extractor springs. Bolt gas rings are a scheduled-replacement set, or should be. A complete spare bolt, checked, of course, for proper headspace, doesn't take up much room and can save a day.



Buffer springs: either replace a stock spring every 3000 rounds, or get one of the "lifetime" springs such as this 17-7 PH flat-wire. It's shown next to a standard-form chrome silicon, another good choice. Either will last effectively forever, and the flat-wire has more "spring" which matters with higher-pressure loads.

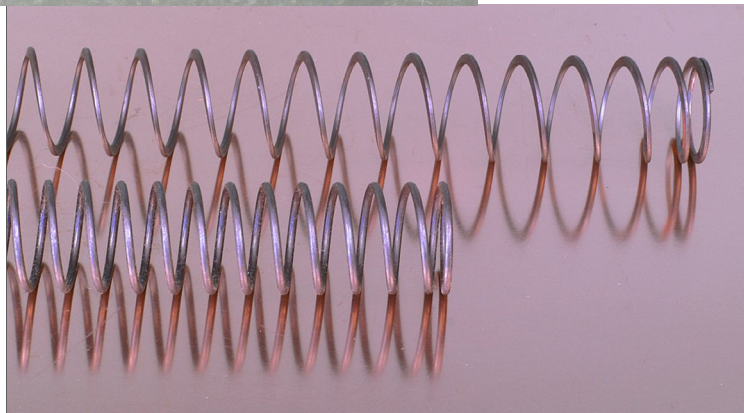
Same for extractor and ejector springs: replace on a schedule or upgrade to chrome-silicon. Upgrade makes more sense. Most other springs can be ignored immediately and forever after initial installation.

Eventually, trigger return and hammer springs need to be replaced, unless, again, you went to chrome-silicon to start. A hammer spring has lost significant power after 2500 rounds, which will increase hammer-fall time.

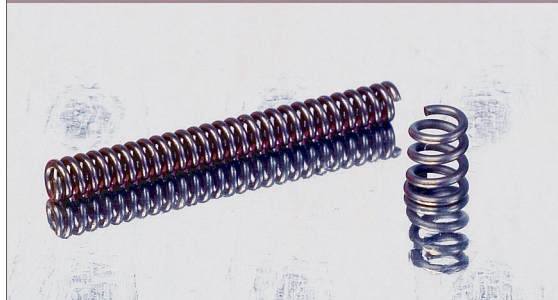
MAINTENANCE SPARES

There are parts I replace on a routine. Bolt gas rings, for one (actually, for three). They're cheap enough and way easy to replace. I do it every 1500 rounds. Other "supply item" parts? Normally, nothing until/unless it breaks. I keep an assortment of springs handy. I have spare bolt stops, firing pins, as said, and extractors. Ejectors don't usually break, but their springs sho can.

Speaking of: I am a believer in chrome-silicon springs. These perform better than those made of commonly-used music wire, but a main (the main) reason they're best is that they are far less prone to breakage. They can last literally the life of the rifle, and maintain performance level. Otherwise, I suggest replacing music-wire-variety springs on 2500-round intervals. There's a lot of heat transferred to extractor and ejector springs, which weakens the metal, and that's generally the reason they break; the chrome-silicon springs endure heat way on beyond what a rifle can generate.



Standard-variety buffer springs, in my experience, have a maximum OEM performance level of, at most, 3000 rounds. A sacked spring is one cause behind the "mystery malfunctions" that befall an



AR15 at around a 4000-5000 round count. It's also a solution (along with a thorough cleaning of the bolt carrier recess that houses the tail end of the bolt). If you spend up for the preventative bliss of chrome-silicon, or, even better, 17-7 PH stainless, you will

never have to replace the buffer spring again.