



This is the "sporter" version of the Spanish CETME 7.62mm assault rifle; it is shown with a five-round clip and a web sling. Except for minor optional features, the German-made G-3 (pictured in close-up views on page 32) is virtually identical

## GUN NEWS THE MILI-SPORT

If you read the ads of arms manufacturers and importers, you're sure to have noticed the recent flood of "sporters" that have been "factory-converted" from automatic military rifles. So far, the group includes the Colt AR-15, Eagle Carbine, Belgian FAL, Johnson Spitfire, Plainfield Carbine and Stoner 63—plus the newly arrived CETME and G-3, a pair of 20-shot .308 autos that are almost identical twins. Like the others, the two latest models have retained some of the features of combat weapons.

A lot of shooters are buying the hybrid service-hunting guns, but many other sportsmen have raised a howl of protest to the effect that such arms belong on battlefields, not game fields. A few outdoor writers have even brought up the question of whether some of the rifles should be legal for sporting use.

Most of these guns have been somewhat slicked up in appearance, but they still look more military than civilian—and this is unquestionably part of

their sales appeal: They combine shootability with the attraction of collecting war souvenirs.

Of course, all models have been altered so that they operate only as semiautos, not full automatics. But some of them have 15- or 20-shot clips, and at least a couple hold 30 rounds. Since more than a five-shot capacity is illegal for hunting in most states, you either have to put a plug in the magazines or get a smaller one. Among both gun writers and the general public, these arms have sparked a good deal of heated controversy.

There is no doubt that most of them are rugged, reliable, fast-handling and easy to maintain. However, they are frequently not as accurate as conventional sporting rifles, and some of them are offered in calibers that aren't appropriate for hunting. Moreover, it is generally agreed that a high magazine capacity is not necessary for civilian use—and, in fact, is not conducive to sportsmanlike stalking

## Flood of factory-converted assault rifles sparks



The accessories offered with the CETME include a \$12 pair of tunnel-type mounts that permit the iron sights to be used while a scope is on the gun. This photo shows the metal bipod extended; also note the interchangeable five- and 20-shot magazines

## FTER INVASION By Larry S. Sterett

and aiming. Finally, it is sometimes claimed that the warlike appearance of these "mili-sporters" provides anti-gun propagandists with an excuse for screaming that hunters are merely frustrated killers.

The latest "mili-sporters" to hit the market are the Spanish-made CETME rifle and the German G-3, which are really just slight variations of one gun. Both are offered with optional features, but the basic prices are \$219.95 for the CETME Sport Model, \$225 for the Heckler & Koch G-3. Whatever else can be said for or against them, these arms are chambered for a fine sporting cartridge, the .308. Of course, this has also proved to be a good combat load, and these guns certainly have retained their assault-rifle looks—complete with flash suppressor, handgun-type pistol grip and military sights.

Having done some research into their backgrounds—and having thoroughly tested both models—I'm going to give you the facts, pro and con. You

can draw your own conclusions as to whether these guns are worthy additions to a sporting arsenal.

Toward the end of World War II, German ordnance personnel devoted considerable effort to designing an automatic rifle that could be manufactured from low-cost stampings in a minimum amount of time. Out of this project came the MP-44 and STG-45 assault rifles, chambered for the 7.92mm Kurz cartridge. These guns were successful, but the end of the war halted manufacture.

Not long afterward, one of the designers who helped to develop the STG-45—a Herr Vorgrimmler—was employed by the Spanish government to perfect an improved version of it for Spain's armed forces. Vorgrimmler undertook this project at the Centro de Estudios Tecnicos de Materiales Especiales (CETME) at the Instituto Nacional de Industria in Madrid. Early in the 1950's, the new gun was developed and was labeled the CETME. Technicians

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**controversy over .308 "sporters" with 20-shot clips**



Using the bipod, the author got four-inch groups with the CETME at 100 yards



Above, left, the 20-shot clip of the G-3 is released with the left hand, while the right hand remains on the pistol grip. Above right, the 100-yard rear notch is in aiming position and the 400-yard aperture faces you



### THE MILI-SPORTER INVASION/continued

also developed an unusual cartridge for the gun. It was a new 7.92mm, soon modified to 7.62mm, and it originally employed a unique tapered bullet that weighed only 100 grains but was as long as the case. This slug had an aluminum core and a gilding-metal jacket that was open at both ends. It left the muzzle at 2,690 fps. The entire cartridge was only a trifle longer than today's standard .308 round, and strange as it looked, it worked well. However, it was abandoned when NATO nations decided to chamber all their shoulder arms for the standard 7.62mm (.308) cartridge with a shorter, heavier bullet. While not a NATO member, Spain thought it would be wise to conform to the same specifications as the other European countries.

The CETME rifle was adopted by Spain in 1958 with the NATO service cartridge, firing a 150-grain bullet that has a muzzle velocity of 2,800 fps. Shortly afterward, the rifle was also adopted by West Germany. The Spanish CETME Sporter is distributed by Mars Equipment Corp., 3318 W. Devon Ave., Chicago, Ill., 60600. The German version, manufactured by the firm of Heckler and Koch, is imported as the G-3 by Golden State Arms Corp., 386 W. Green St., Pasadena, Calif., 91105.

Both rifles will handle any standard military or sporting .308 load. The barrel on each is 17.7 inches long (not including a two-inch flash suppressor), and the over-all length is 40 inches. However, the CETME is heavier than the G-3. The Spanish rifle scales fully 10.4 pounds with a wooden stock and a metal forearm that features a folding bipod. It can be had at the same price with a wooden forearm and no bipod, but this reduces the weight by no more than a few ounces. The G-3 weighs only about

eight pounds, because it comes with a black plastic stock and forearm, and without a bipod. You can have wood instead of plastic for \$20 extra, but since the wooden stock (on both the CETME and the G-3) looks like a whittled slab, I wouldn't order it.

For an additional \$24.95, you can get a steel forearm and bipod for the G-3, and for \$49.95 extra, you can order a retractable metal stock. If you go for all the optional features on the G-3 (the forearm with the bipod, the retractable stock, a \$3.95 leather sling, a \$3.95 magazine loader, an extra magazine and a field-cleaning kit), you can spend almost \$300—about the price of a Weatherby!

The pistol grip on each gun is made of black plastic—smooth surfaced on the CETME and crackled on the G-3. The metal finish is a dull black, similar to Parkerizing, but it is of better quality on the CETME, where more attention has been paid to the removal of weld marks. The stocks on both guns are attached with two retaining pins, and the forearms are held with a single pin. There is a slight difference in the shape of the magazine housings, and the CETME has a receiver retaining pin at the forward edge of the trigger assembly.

The safety lever on both models is located on the left side of the receiver, within easy reach of your thumb—assuming you're right-handed—and the positions are marked "S" and "F." The safe position is at the top on both models, but on the CETME the lever is rotated downward through a 90° arc to the fire position, while the G-3's arc is only 45°.

The magazine latch on the CETME is on the right side of the receiver, behind the magazine housing, and is of the "push-through" type found on many automatic pistols. It is not easy to reach unless you take your hand off the pistol grip. On the G-3, the same type of latch is used, but a lever has been





This is a Spanish soldier on maneuvers, firing an early-type military CETME from the prone, with the bipod extended



The unfired and fired .308's show that the G-3's chamber leaves flute marks on cases; at right, the CETME's barrel climbs in rapid fire



added below the receiver so that you can release it with your left hand while keeping your right hand on the pistol grip. On a military rifle, this is an excellent feature; fast replacement of an empty clip is not essential on a sporter, but it is handy.

In military use, the combination flash-suppressor and muzzle brake also serves as a grenade launcher and a bayonet-ring base. All it does on the civilian versions is to emphasize the combat look. It's a screw-on unit, and the G-3 has a small spring that keeps it from loosening. The CETME lacks this spring, and the suppressor tends to shoot loose. This annoyance can be solved by drilling a hole for a set screw—or simply by removing the suppressor.

The CETME's hooded front sight is cone-shaped, and it screws into a special housing. On the G-3 the front sight is a post that is held by a pin in the same type of hooded housing. If desired, this post can be replaced with a more precise target model, since commercial sight inserts are attached in the same way.

The bottom part of the housing on both guns, below the front sight, contains a spring-loaded receiver cap with knurled edges. The CETME's cap has a small aluminum tube threaded onto it, and this contains a pull-through bristle brush for field cleaning. There is nothing but empty space behind the G-3's cap, though you can buy a separate cleaning kit for \$7.95. I found that a surplus .30-caliber pull-through brush fits in the empty space and at 50¢ it was a better investment.

The CETME has four flip-up rear sights, arranged at 90° angles around an axis, like spokes on a wheel. The sight for 100 yards is a notch, while those for 200, 300 and 400 yards are apertures. The G-3 has a corresponding 100-yard notch and three apertures cut into a slanted thimble which is rotated clockwise or counterclockwise to line up each setting.

Both rifles can be used with standard scopes. The CETME has permanent scope blocks welded to the top of the receiver, and you can install a Weaver-type mount or a high, Spanish-made accessory mount that costs \$12 and has a "tunnel" through it for iron-sight use. If you want to mount a scope on the G-3, you can buy a clip-on mount from the importer for \$25. Another accessory which will shortly be available is a German Hensoldt sniper scope—which costs \$250, or more than the rifle itself! (As a matter of fact, if you get a G-3 complete with bipod, retractable stock, sniper scope, etc., you'll have to fork over \$575—which is enough to pay for a scoped bolt-action rifle, an auto shotgun, a good center-fire single-action revolver and a autoloading .22 rifle . . . with enough change left over to buy several boxes of ammo for each gun.)

Field-stripping is pretty much the same with the CETME and the G-3, and it's easy. First, you push out the stock-retaining pins and insert them (just to avoid losing them) in storage holes in the side of the stock. Next, pull down and back on the grip assembly (with the CETME, you must first loosen the retaining pin just ahead of the trigger); then pull back on the cocking handle and remove the bolt and bolt carrier. This disassembly can be completed in less than half a minute.

To operate either gun, you pull the cocking handle (which is on the left side of the receiver extension) backward into a locking notch. Then insert the magazine into its well in front of the trigger guard. The cocking handle is then pulled down, allowed to slam forward—and you're ready to go.

Mars sells the CETME with a five-round magazine, and also offers a 20-shot clip for \$7 extra. (If you use the latter for hunting, you'll have to insert a plug to conform with the five-shot-capacity law.)

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## THE MILI-SPORTER INVASION

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The G-3 is distributed by Golden State with a 20-shot magazine as standard equipment, and an extra clip of the same capacity is offered for \$9.95. I began my firing tests by putting a 20-round magazineful through each rifle as fast as I could, shooting from the hip just to check functioning. I poured the slugs into a high backstop and found that there was a barrel rise of about 7° by the time I'd emptied each magazine. There were no malfunctions, but both guns eject their empties with such force that it's hard to find the cases after shooting. The G-3 tossed them about 15 feet, while the CETME threw them a whopping 35 feet.

Like some other military rifles, both guns have fluted chambers to aid in cartridge extraction, and these flutes are impressed into the fired cases. To see if this would affect handloading, I ran a batch of Winchester Super-X .308 rounds through the guns and then reloaded them, using 44 grains of #4895 and 150-grain GI bullets. All the cases had to be full-length resized, but after six loadings, I saw no signs of metal fatigue such as splitting, separations, etc. But since .308 brass is plentiful, case life shouldn't be much of a problem anyhow. These guns will handle any commercial .308 ammo or standard handloads, but the box magazine requires you to seat the bullets in your reloads so that the over-all cartridge length is the same as GI stuff with 150-grain bullets. Both sizing and seating must be done with extra care if you're to avoid malfunctions.

No feeding troubles occurred when my reloads were fired through the CETME, but some difficulty was experienced with the G-3. After my third shot, the maximum-length cartridges shifted forward in the magazine and did not feed smoothly. If I had not sized and trimmed the shells very carefully, I probably would have had frequent jams.

For accuracy testing, I mounted the CETME with a 6X scope and fired a series of five-shot groups at 100 yards from the prone position, utilizing the bipod. The spreads averaged about four inches; I cut this to two inches with sandbags and no bipod. With the iron sights, the groups widened to nearly eight inches. This large spread is due in part to the open rear notch that's used at 100 yards—it's not conducive to the finest accuracy.

Since I tested the G-3 without its optional bipod, I fired it from the bench. I did not have the scope

mounts for this gun, but it turned in some surprising groups with iron sights. Most of the spreads ran three to four inches at 100 yards. I'm at a loss to explain this difference in performance, since the 100-yard rear sight is the same as on the CETME. It might be possible, though, that the bipod has an adverse effect on the Spanish gun's accuracy.

However, the German arm did not handle different bullet weights as well as the CETME. The Spanish rifle shot various loads to pretty much the same area of impact, while the G-3 walked some of them right off the top of the target. On the plus side for the G-3, it had a more subdued muzzle blast than the CETME and seemed to kick less even though it's a lighter gun. This may be the result of slight differences in the stock designs.

Which is the better buy? That's hard to say, since each gun has advantages and drawbacks. However, the CETME costs slightly less than the G-3 and can be ordered with a five-shot magazine, which is a legal requirement for hunting in most areas.

I tried to be completely objective in my testing—and in writing this report. In ending, I should add that these latest "mili-sporters" are accurate enough for timber hunting, and that the .308 cartridge has certainly proved to be a good load for any game up to the size of deer or elk. However, I think I've been fair in presenting the less desirable aspects of these arms, too. The sales of the "mili-sporters" and the number of models available prove that many shooters think they're great. Many other people—including a number of outdoor writers—heartily disapprove of them. You have the facts, and your stand in the controversy is up to you. □

### CETME SPECIFICATIONS

Caliber	7.62mm (.308)
Action	auto
Magazine capacity and type	5, detachable box (extra 20-shot box, \$7)
Barrel length	17.7 inches
Stock	wooden buttstock; wooden forearm or metal handguard with bipod
Sight, front	hooded cone
Sight, rear	flip-ups; 100-yard notch, apertures for 200, 300 and 400 yards
Price	\$219.95

### G-3 SPECIFICATIONS

Caliber	7.62mm (.308)
Action	auto
Magazine capacity and type	20, detachable box
Barrel length	17.7 inches
Stock	plastic buttstock and forearm (wood, \$20 extra; steel handguard and bipod, \$24.95)
Sight, front	hooded post
Sight, rear	revolving thimble with 100-yard notch, apertures for 200, 300 and 400 yards
Price	\$225