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There are a lot of articles and forum threads out there comparing MIL and MOA, but most either aren't objective or they're too complex. I will try to avoid both of these pitfalls in this article. Summary A few months ago I asked Bryan Litz if he personally used MIL or MOA. Bryan is an expert among experts in the shooting community, and after reading his books, I've gained a respect for his scientific approach to decisions like this. His answer was so succinct and objective, I thought it could serve as a summary for this whole comparison: You can't really go wrong with either (MIL or MOA). They are both equally effective, it comes down to how well you know the system. If you are familiar with MOA, I would not recommend switching to MIL. I have a few MIL scopes, but mainly because they are on rifles used for military evaluation projects and that society is now mostly converted to MILS, so when in Rome ... So if you have a hunting buddy that you want to be on the same page with, it may be a factor. But for their own use, none of them have an inherent advantage. – Bryan Litz, Author of Applied Ballistics for Long Range Shooting & Chief Ballistician at Berger Bullets There are a handful of minor differences/trade-offs between MIL & MOA, but there is no inherent advantage to both systems. Most people blow the small differences way out of proportion. So if you are like I was and emphasize what to go with ... relax, is also not the wrong decision. Here are the biggest differences and things to keep in mind. The rest of the article will expand on these in more detail: 1/4 MOA adjustments are a little more accurate than 1/10 MIL. MIL values are a little easier to communicate if you think in yards/inches math for range estimation is easier with MOA. If you think in meter / cm mathematics is easier with MIL. If you have a friend who already uses one, there is some benefit to being on the same system. About 90% of professionals use MIL. Multiple product options in MIL. Whatever you decide to go with matching tower/reticle (i.e. MIL/MIL or MOA/MOA) The factual differences there are only a few differences between the systems that have great value. They are very small, and hardly worth mentioning. 1/4 MOA is slightly more accurate than 1/10 MIL. The most common adjustments are 1/4 MOA or 1/10 MIL. Technically, 1/4 MOA click provides slightly finer adjustments than 1/10 MIL. This difference is very small and it would be hard to argue that you could shoot between those numbers. That equates only to 0.1 difference in adjustments of 100 yards or 1 of 1,000 yards, and there are very few shooters who could hold well enough to notice that difference (or isolate it to that single factor). I can't. If the finer is better, why not go to 1/8 MOA click? Some areas have it, but most shooter wants to is too fine. In fact, on the 2013 Steel Safari competition Ray Sanchez said he actually thinks 1/4 MOA is too fine, and actually prefers 1/2 MOA adjustments to his applications. Ray is a very skilled shooter who has won national long range shooting competitions and is respected in the shooting community. He thought for practical long-range shooting he'd rather be able to call quickly (15 MOA adjustment is 60 clicks with 1/4 MOA adjustments, but only 30 with 1/2 MOA), and his experience has taught him that having adjustments as fine as 1/4 MOA just isn't as important as the rest of the things that go into executing a good shot. I can't say I totally agree with him, but there seems to be a balance point there somewhere, between too fine of an adjustment, but fine enough to call in the place you want to hit. Most shooters agree that 1/4 MOA or 1/10 MIL are both right around that sweet spot, which is evident in the areas used by the professionals. MIL values are a little easier to communicate You can see in the map examples below, 1/4 MOA adjustments take up more space and are a little harder to read than 1/10 MIL adjustments. The adjustment for 725 yards is 22.75 MOA (4 digits) or 6.6 MIL (2 digits). It is essentially the same angular adjustment (dope cards are both for the same ballistics), but MP companies are larger units, so they are represented by significantly smaller values than MOA. Also units in 10ths fit our numerical system (base 10) more naturally than fractional units. Not only does it make an interval card simpler and faster to read, it's also a little easier to communicate height values to a partner. It's just easier to process 6.6 instead of 22.75. How do you think, of course? If you naturally think & speak in terms of meters and centimeters, the math for range estimation is easier with a MIL system. But if you obviously think & talk in terms of yards and inches, math is easier with an MOA system. If you don't plan to do area estimation with your scope (which few do), then both are equally effective. Here are a few questions to help you figure out what you're naturally thinking in: When asked how far away a target is, would you answer in yards or meters? When asked how wide a target is, would you answer in inches or centimeters? Is your rangefinder set to provide units in yards or meters? Is your dope short in yards or meters? If you typically think in yards & inches (i.e. U.S. Standard Units), that doesn't mean you can't go MIL. But if you're around guys like Todd Hodnett or members of the military who use this system... you will quickly notice that they speak in the form of meters (i.e. metric units). Overtime you can train your brain to think in metric, but is almost like learning to speak another language. It just takes time/discipline and/or immersion in the new system to switch. If you do interval estimation in yards with a MIL based system, math will be more difficult. I have given several examples illustrating this at the end of this article. It's actually too hard for a lot of people to do in their head, so they end up relying on a card map filled with sizes of dimensions in inches, the measured size in the MILS and the area ones that correspond. In fact, there are even many tools out there to solve this very problem (eg Whiz Wheel, Mildot Master Slide Rule). You can avoid having to wear such a thing completely if you simply stick to making range estimates in meters with a MIL based system, and in yards with an MOA based system. Like Bryan Litz mentioned, if you have a friend who you shoot with a lot who have already committed to either a MIL or MOA system, there is some benefit for both of you to be on the same page. I have friends who shoot both (2 of us MIL, and 2 of us MOA)... and I can attest firsthand that it can be confusing when I ask what a person's content was. If you are competing as a team, then the communication you need to compete makes it almost a must to use the same system. What Does Pro's Use? That's right, 46 people in the 2013 Precision Rifle Series said they used an MIL based reticle, and only 3 said they use an MOA based reticle. 7 said they used a reticle that is available in both MIL & MOA, so I threw them out because I couldn't say for sure which camp they fell into. But a 49 person sample size that includes people willing to compete in up to 15 national matches each year can be very telling. This doesn't mean MIL is better. It just means MIL based scopes are more popular, even among the top 1% of shooters out there. It can also be a chicken and egg issue or even almost a self-fulfilling prophecy because high-end MIL scopes are more readily available. The popularity of the Military & Manufacturer Influence MIL system is undoubtedly strongly influenced by the military standardization on the MIL system. When the military standardizes on something, it suddenly becomes very popular in the civilian world as well (sometimes no matter how it compares to other options). For example, look at the popularity of the civilian equivalent of NATO-based cartridges like 223 Rem, 308 Win, 300 Win Mag, 338 Lapua and 50 Cal. There may be other cartridges that are ballistic superior to some of these rounds... but that short list still continues to outsell every two rounds year over year. Many manufacturers choose to focus on MIL-based systems because they compete (or hope) for military contracts. And since the two systems are so a single and there is not an inherent advantage to either... why have to tool your entire assembly line to offer both? Even as there does not seem to be demand for MOA-based systems, businesses can a business decision to offer ONLY MIL-based systems to reduce their internal complexity and increase efficiency. Many of the high end scopes are made by European companies like Schmidt & Bender, and virtually every country outside the United States has switched completely to the metric system. So it may not be as big a sacrifice in their eyes to only offer MIL based systems. Nevertheless, there are more products based on MIL than MOA. For example, try to find a spotting range with an MOA based reticle (used for straight goals). I personally looked a few months ago and slowly became convinced that they simply do not exist (at least at the time). Matching Reticle & Towers Whatever you decide on, don't mix the reticle & towers of different units. Many entry-level scopes may have a mildot reticle (MIL based), but the tower adjustments are in 1/4 MOA click. It doesn't make much sense and can limit how quickly you can make 2nd round corrections. If you use a reticle/tower system that is either MIL/MIL or MOA/MOA and you see your first bullet splash affected low, you can quickly measure how far low using your reticle and call that extra adjustment for a quick follow-up shot. For example, if it was 1 MOA or even 1 MILE low, just turn your knob an extra 1 MOA or 1 MIL respectively and you should have a second round hit. Alternatively, you can hold high with the amount you measured instead of calling it and avoiding conversion, but I'd like to know what the correct dope should have been, so next time I can dial it in and get a 1st shot hit. When you mix the devices you are essentially trying to live with a foot in each camp and it can make life harder than it should be. For example, if you had an area with a mildot reticle and MOA adjustments then the ball splash was 1.5 miles low. You would have to do some math to find out what the corresponding adjustment would be in the MOA. The math below indicates that you should call an additional 5.25 MOA (if you used 1/4 MOA click). I have a very smart friend who is a skilled long range shooter and he actually prefers a MIL reticle with MOA towers. It blew my mind when he said it, but he prefers to talk about wind holding in mils because that's what most other people talk in. But he prefers the finer adjustments 1/4 MOA click gives, and for him the dope card is just a number, he turns his scope tower to ... He doesn't care if it's MOA or MIL. So on his dope map, his height adjustments are in moa and his wind adjustments are in MIL. I've had to do it for one of my areas in the past and I personally didn't like it. But there are at least a few opinions out there about this. Range Estimation Examples The examples below illustrate how easy it is to use the MOA system to do interval estimation in yards and how well the MIL system can do estimation in meters. There are also some examples that illustrate how difficult mathematics can be if you try to mix metric/standard systems by trying to use the MIL system to do range estimation in yards. Here are the interval estimating formulas we will use for these examples: You can see in formulas that we have to more some things at 10 or 100 ... but when you mix yards and MILS you end up with strange constants like 27.8 to account for the necessary conversions between standard and metric systems. Some people even show that number to be 27.778, but that level of precision is just not necessary for range estimates when using small arms. Multiplying by 10 or 100 is simple compared to multiplying things by 27.8. Even the best math whiz would have a hard time doing this level of math in the field under any kind of stress or time limit. MOA Example 1: Simplest Math Scenario Using your MOA reticle, you measure Target A to be 2.0 MOA wide. You know the real goal is 18 wide and you want to find the area in yards. MOA Example 2: Complex mathematical scenario Using your MOA reticle you measure target A to be 3.5 MOA wide. You know the real goal is 18 wide and you want to find the area in yards. MIL Example 1: Simplest Math Scenario Using your MIL reticle, you measure Target A to be 1 MILE wide. You know the real goal is 18 wide and you want to find the area in yards. MIL Example 2: Complex mathematical scenario Using your MIL reticle, you measure Target A to be 0.7 MILES wide. You know the real goal is 18 wide and you want to find the area in yards. MIL Example 3: Sticking with Metric (Size in CM & Range in Meters) Use your MIL reticle, you measure Target B to be 0.4 MIL wide. You know that the actual target is 30 cm wide and you want to find the area in meters. People who liked this post also read... Best Rifle Scope – What the Pros Use: This post shows the scope and reticles the best precision rifle shooters in the country use. It's based on what the top 50 long-range shooters brought with them to the latest Precision Rifle Series (PRS) Finale. Target exposures for a PRS match can range from 25 to 1,200+ yards, but there is definitely a focus on the precision rifle part regardless of range. This is some unique hard data about what optics the pros use. Best long-range scope: Buyers Guide & Features to look for: Advertising around long-range areas can be misleading. This post boils it all down to the biggest features you should focus on when comparing long-range areas. This guide explains what all the different features mean, gives you an idea of which is more important, and helps you filter some of the marketing noise when researching the rifle I will also make specific recommendations for different price points, to help you get the best rifle option for money. Money. Copyright 2020 PrecisionRifleBlog.com, All rights reserved. Reserved.

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