

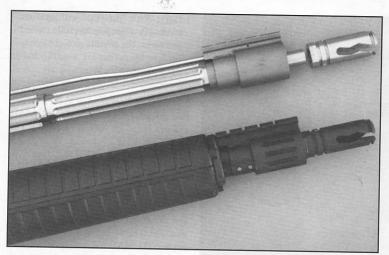
The M16 series has quite a bit of competition, *supposedly*. There are a number of different caliber 5.56x45mm NATO assault rifles in service throughout the world. A brief survey would include the Austrian Steyr AUG (now largely ignored outside the Austrian and Australian armies, and the subject of great controversy in Australia), Belgian FNC (already almost obsolete), French FAMAS bullpup, the new and as yet unproven Heckler & Koch G36, Israeli Galil (essentially a too-heavy Kalashnikov), the dreadful British L85A1 bullpup, and a number of AKs now chambered for this round. None of them have come even close to developing the almost bewildering array of potential improvements and enhancements that can be attached to, or modified on, today's M16 series. No other modern infantry rifle (actually in service) offers to an operator the amount of sophistication provided by the latest improved M16s. Furthermore, after almost forty years of battle-proven service, most of the original M16 whiners have dried up and blown away. In addition, with the exception of a few armchair commandos still firing from bunkers in LaLa Land, no one champions the 7.62x51mm NATO battle rifle anymore (and certainly no one who has ever really humped one of these brutes and their ammo loads in a real operational area and had a comparative experience with the M16 series).



Yet all is not necessarily perfect with the M16, as all military small arms - especially the very best ones - continue to evolve throughout their service life. Emphasis at this time in the U.S. military is focused on the M4 Carbine family of weapons, all of which feature 14.5-inch barrels (measured from the breech face to the muzzle, sans flash hider and with the bolt in battery) with a twist of one turn in 7 inches. Many feel that at 850 rpm their cyclic rate of fire is too high. In addition

Lead Photo: Firing from cover is a prerequisite to survival in a real combat environment.

Left: Arms Tech Compak 16 equipped with Aimpoint red dot sight.



the flash signature is significant and premature barrel erosion has been a problem.

These problems and others have been addressed by the Recon Rifle recently introduced by Arms Tech Ltd. (Dept. SAR, 5133 North Central Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85012; phone: 602-272-9045; fax: 602-272-1922). The Recon Rifle's most salient feature is a gas trap gas system very reminiscent of the early .30 M1 Garand rifles. This system requires a much longer gas tube than normally associated with the M16 series. But, it provides a significant number of attributes, not the least of which are a reduction in the cyclic rate, decrease in the flash signature, improved reliability, longer barrel life, easier maintenance and better operator control in burst fire. Originally fielded in the Arms Tech Compak 16 which has a 9.5-inch barrel, this gas trap gas system lowered the cyclic rate to 643 rpm.

The new Recon Rifle has a 14-inch barrel (measured from the breech face to rear end of the gas trap, i.e., the rifled portion of the barrel) with a twist of one turn in 9 inches to stabilize a wider range of projectile weights. Production series specimens will feature a progressive gain twist (the rifling starts out straight at the chamber end and then progresses to a right-hand 1:9-inch twist at the muzzle). This increases both barrel life and muzzle velocity. This latter feature is especially impor-

Right: Arms Tech Compak 16 - note MIL-STD-1913 rail above gas trap gas system, original Vortex flash hider, and front sling swivel which rotates 360 degrees around the barrel.

tant; as the 5.56x45mm NATO ball round's wound ballistics potential decreases with the lower velocities associated with shortened barrels and increased distance to the target. The Recon Rifle's heavy barrel has been fluted to decrease the weight and somewhat enhance cooling while maintaining the barrel's structural integrity. SAR's tests indicate the cyclic rate of the Recon Rifle to be 550-600 rpm, depending upon ammunition, fouling and atmospheric conditions.

To further reduce the flash signature, the Recon Rifle has been equipped with the new three-prong Vortex Tiger Shark flash suppressor. Without doubt, the Vortex is the most effective flash suppressor I have ever threaded onto the end of an M16's muzzle. During the war in El Salvador I installed hundreds of them on the M16s of the famed Atlacatl Battalion and

Left: The Recon Rifle's heavy barrel has been fluted to decrease the weight and somewhat enhance cooling while maintaining the barrel's structural integrity.

they proved themselves many times over in combat. The effectiveness of the Vortex depends to a large extent on the ability of the prongs - which are offset from the bore's axis - to resonate, very much like a tuning fork, and create the turbulence required to break up the gases that cause the rifle's flash signature. Installing a brush guard around the tips of the prongs will invariably diminish their effectiveness. For some time now both the original fourprong and newer three-prong types have been made from 8620 steel - the same material used to fabricate M14 receivers. Manufactured by Smith Enterprise, Inc. (Dept. SAR, 1701 West 10th Street, Suite 14, Tempe, Arizona 85281; phone: 480-964-1818; fax: 480-921-9987; e-mail: smithent@gateway.net; website: www.smithenterprise.com) the Vortex has a heat-treated surface to a depth of 0.006inch with a surface hardness of 52 to 54 Rockwell C and a core hardness of 36 to 38 Rockwell C. These heat-treat specifications are similar to those found on M14 receivers and the M16 bolt carrier.

Overall length of the Recon Rifle is 36 inches with the stock open and only 32.5 inches with the stock collapsed. It weighs 7 pounds, 1 ounce with an empty 30-round magazine.

The buttstock is of the conventional M4 type with a synthetic butt assembly that slides back and forth over a black anod-



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ized, tubular aluminum alloy sub housing. There are four locked positions, the middle two obviously for use by personnel wearing ballistic armor. There is a fixed sling swivel at the bottom, rear end of the stock and the usual sling slot in the center. The front sling swivel, immediately to the rear of the gas trap gas system, rotates 360 degrees. The "A2"-type handguards are 12 inches in length and provide more than adequate length for a variety of shooting positions.

The "DuckBill" pistol grip, manufactured by Alamo Sales (Dept. SAR, Tiger McKee, 1701 Waller Road SE, Huntsville, AL 35801; phone: 888-486-4840; e-mail: tiger@shootrite.org) exhibits state-of-theart human engineering with a front projection at the bottom that keeps the firing hand from slipping downward. It is injection

molded using 70% nylon and 30% fiberglass to match the composition of the original M16 pistol grip. It also eliminates the sharp corner between the trigger guard and the grip, as well as the irritating gap often present in that area. Furthermore, to accommodate a large variety of hand sizes, the finger swell found on the M16A2 pistol grip has been removed. This is, quite simply, the best pistol grip you can slap on an M16/AR-15 type rifle.

The upper receiver is of the so-called "flat top" configuration with a MIL-STD-1913 interface rail for mounting both optical sights, such as the superb EOTech HOLOsight and emergency iron sights. A 2.5-inch Mil-STD-1913 rail has been permanently attached above the gas trap for attaching folding front sights or other accessories.



<u>Left:</u> The M4-type collapsible buttstock assembly has four locked positions, the middle two obviously for use by personnel wearing ballistic armor.

An ideal backup sight to the EOTech Holographic Diffraction Sight is the MAD manufactured by GG&G (Dept. SAR, 3602 East 42nd Stravenue, Tucson, AZ 85713; phone: 520-748-7167; fax: 520-748-7583; e-mail: gggaz@aol.com). The MAD was originally developed to fulfill a request from Naval Surface Warfare for a backup iron sight that provided both a large and small aperture on the same plane and would thus be zeroed to the same point of impact. The MAD has four apertures, two of each size (so that rotating the aperture in either direction will bring the next size into view). The small aperture diameter is 0.073-inch and the large aperture is 0.199inch in diameter. It uses the standard Colt windage knob and windage screw. One click of the windage knob provides approximately 0.48 MOA change when mounted on the M16A2E4 rifle and about 0.65 MOA on the M4 carbine.

The MAD mount body is manufactured from 6061 T6 aluminum, hard anodized per milspec. The stem and aperture disc are made from 4140 steel, black manganese phosphated per milspec. The MAD overhangs the rear of the receiver by 0.200-inch. This provides a lip so that the sight can be easily deployed even with a gloved hand. The unit locks in the up and down position with a positive detent.

A perfect complement to a MAD mounted on the Recon Rifle would be GG&G's Flip Up Front Sight for dovetailed gas blocks, which can be easily installed on the MIL-STD-1913 rail on top of the gas trap gas system. Only a cap screw wrench is required for installation. Once installed, it can remain in place as it can be raised or lowered instantly.

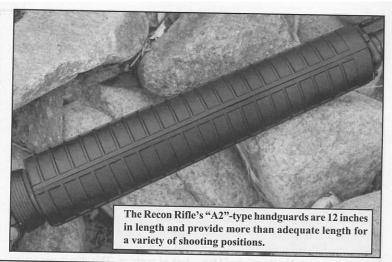
In all other regards the Recon Rifle's

Left: The "DuckBill" pistol grip exhibits state-of-the-art human engineering with a front projection at the bottom that keeps the firing grip from slipping downward. It also eliminates the sharp corner between the trigger guard and the grip, as well as the irritating gap often present in that area.

features are those of the M16A2/A3/A2E4 rifle and M4 carbine family of weapons, except, of course, it does not have the M4's potential for installation of the M203 40mm grenade launcher (although there are several multiple rail systems on the market that could be used to attach an M203 to the Recon Rifle). Accuracy testing provided results consistent the usual M4 performance. Light and handy, although somewhat front heavy, the Recon Rifle appears to be a viable alternative to the M4.

T&E summary:

Provides lower cyclic rate, higher velocities and enhanced reliability.



Wound Ballistics and the 5.56x45mm ball round

Cutting right to the quick, the principal mechanism of wounding is the wound track itself. As the bullet travels through the body it crushes and cuts through tissue and blood vessels, and also breaks bones, producing what is commonly called the "permanent cavity."

The size of the permanent cavity can be increased by three factors. First, if the bullet yaws and its long axis makes a greater angle with the path of travel, a wider area of tissue comes into contact with the bullet and is crushed. Secondly, expanding (or mushrooming) bullets increase their cross-sectional area and damage more tissue. This effect is almost never observed with Full Metal Jacket (FMJ) military ball ammunition. Third, fragments from the bullet can detach and disrupt tissue outside the primary wound track. The objective is to slice and dice as much as possible, as deeply as possible.

In addition, a temporary cavity may be formed as tissue is stretched or accelerated away from the bullet's path. Relatively elastic tissue (such as muscle, intestines and lung) rebounds shortly after stretch by temporary cavitation with little damage. Temporary cavitation typically produces serious damage only in nonelastic organs such as the liver or heart.

Penetration is, without doubt, the most important single parameter. The

bullet must penetrate deeply enough to crush, cut and break through the human body's vital structures and organs. The capacity to penetrate up to 18 inches of soft tissue is desirable and any bullet incapable of penetrating at least 12 inches is not acceptable for armed conflict. "Magic" frangible projectiles that literally "explode" upon contact with soft tissue are a complete hoax.

A great deal of misinformation has been published about the reason for the effectiveness of both the Vietnam-era M193 55-grain and current 62-grain M855 boattailed bullets - both of which share identical wound ballistics performance. As long as these FMJ bullets travel point-forward their wound track remains small and there is little damage. However, after from 2 to 6 inches of penetration, these projectiles will yaw to 90 degrees, flatten and break apart at the cannelure (crimping groove). The bullet point remains as a flattened triangular section, retaining about 60% of the original bullet weight and penetrating about 13 inches in soft tissue. That portion to the rear of the cannelure breaks into numerous fragments that penetrate up to 3 inches radially away from the main wound track (unlike those of most fragmenting handgun projectiles which tend to remain close to the permanent cavity).

These multiple fragments perforate and weaken tissue. Tissue between two

perforations is often completely detached when subsequently subjected to the sudden stretch of temporary cavitation. Weakened tissue may be split by stretch that would otherwise be absorbed by the tissue's elasticity.

There is a direct correlation between the bullet's velocity and the fragmentation pattern. At a range of 100 yards, and fired from an M16 with a barrel length of 20 inches, the projectile generally breaks into two large fragments. At ranges of more than 200 yards, the bullet flattens somewhat and only a few small fragments squeeze out of the base. If this bullet passes through an arm or leg without striking bone and before it yaws and fragments, the damage will be minimal. Remember, velocity is also very much a factor of barrel length. So, unless that very short, but impressivelooking, barrel on your M16/AR-15 variant has a progressive gain twist barrel, like the Arms Tech Recon Rifle, to substantially increase velocity, you are facing drastically reduced lethality. Outside of the military arena, where its employment is banned, hollow point ammunition can significantly increase the wound ballistics performance of the 5.56x45mm NATO (.223 REM) cartridge.

- P.G.K.

Method of Operation

With the exception of several more or less failed attempts at piston-operated gas systems, the M16/AR-15 series have maintained the same method of operation for almost four decades. That is, until Arms Tech Ltd. developed and perfected what could easily be termed a "Gas Trap M16" (very much in the manner of the early Gas Trap M1 Garand rifle). After firing a round, the projectile passes the gas trap gas cylinder, or chamber, (which replaces the standard M16/AR-15 gas block) where the gas expands and then flows back (at somewhat less, but more consistent pressure than that generated by the standard M16 gas system) through a conventional, but lengthened stainless steel tube and the standard so-called bolt carrier key into the hollow interior of the bolt carrier. As the carrier moves rearward, a cam slot cut into the carrier turns the bolt's cam pin, which causes the bolt to rotate clockwise, freeing the eight locking lugs from their abutments in the barrel extension. The carrier's momentum draws the bolt rearward at a slightly reduced velocity.

There is no primary extraction and the extractor withdraws the cartridge from the barrel's chamber. The springloaded, bump-type ejector emerges from the left side of the bolt face and rotates the empty case, after it has cleared the chamber, around the extractor claw and out the ejection port of the upper receiver body. The bolt carrier assembly continues rearward, compressing the recoil spring and cocking the hammer.

The buffer and recoil spring return the carrier, and a fresh round is stripped from the magazine. All forward bolt motion stops after the round is chambered. The carrier continues forward to contact the rear face of the barrel extension and its cam slot turns the cam pin that rotates the bolt and its lugs counter-clockwise into the locked position. This direct gas action without a piston was taken from the Swedish Ljungman AG42 and French MAS Models 44, 49 and 49/56 rifles.

The M16's trigger mechanism is based upon that of the .30 M1 Garand rifle. The hammer has a notch close to the axis of its rotation that is engaged by the trigger sear and another notch on the underside that permits the hammer to be held by the spring-loaded disconnector sear during semiautomatic fire. When the selector lever is rotated to the "semi" position, as the bolt carrier travels rearward it rotates the hammer downward. At that moment the trigger is still held rearward and the disconnector is rotated forward by its

spring while its hook-shaped sear holds the upper notch on the hammer. To fire another round the trigger must be released so that the trigger sear can move back onto its notch on the hammer. Releasing the trigger also moves the disconnector sear clear of the hammer, which is then held only by the trigger sear. Pulling the trigger again will repeat the process.

When the selector lever is rotated back to the "auto" position and the trigger is then pulled rearward, the hammer is released, but the disconnector is prevented from moving forward to catch the hammer by a cam on the selector lever. It thus plays no role in controlling the hammer. To prevent the hammer from contacting the firing pin before the bolt is fully in battery, an auto safety sear holds it back until released by the bolt carrier's forward travel. When the trigger is released in this firing mode, the hammer disengages from the auto safety sear but is held back by the trigger sear to terminate the burst. The Kalashnikov rifle also utilizes a trigger mechanism patterned after that of the .30 M1 Garand.

- P.G.K.

Recon Rifle Specifications

Caliber: 5.56x45mm NATO (.223 REM)

Method of operation: Gas trap gas system. Locked-breech with eight-lug rotary bolt. Fires from the closed-bolt position.

Selective fire capability.

Cyclic rate: 550 to 600 rpm.

Feed mechanism: 20- and 30-round, staggered-column, detachable, box-type M16 magazines.

Weight, with empty 30-round magazine: 7 pounds, 1 ounce.

Overall length: 36 inches with buttstock fully open; 32.5 inches with buttstock fully collapsed.

Barrel: progressive gain twist - the rifling starts out straight at the chamber end and then progresses to a

right-hand 1:9-inch twist at the muzzle.

Barrel length: 14 inches - measured from the breech face to rear end of the gas trap, i.e., the rifled portion of the

barrel.

Finish: Manganese phosphate.

Furniture: Synthetic

Sights: MIL-STD-1913 rail integral with upper receiver and attached to gas trap gas system for mounting a

wide range of optical and iron sight combinations, including night vision.

Manufacturer: Arms Tech Ltd., Dept. SAR, 5133 North Central Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85012; phone: 602-272-

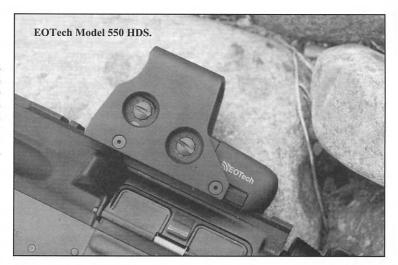
9045; fax: 602-272-1922.

EOTech's New Model 500 series Holographic Diffraction Sight

Weapon sights using an illuminated reticle pattern, often a red dot, and mounted on the Colt M16/AR-15 series now prevail in both law enforcement and military circles. The U.S. Army purchased 80,000 Aimpoint Comp M electronic reflex sights in 1997 for their M16A2 M4 assault rifles. There is, in my opinion, a far better alternative.

EOTech, Inc. (Dept. SAR, 3600 Green Court, Suite 400, Ann Arbor, MI 48105; phone: 734-741-8868; fax: 734-741-8221; e-mail: general@eotechinc.com; website: www.eotech-inc.com) developed and now markets exclusively to law enforcement and military personnel and agencies, the amazing Holographic Diffraction Sight (HDS) Models 510 and 550. A Model 500 HOLOsight was introduced for the civilian market at the 2000 SHOT Show. The HDS features advanced technology previously encountered only on the heads-up displays of weapon targeting systems found in the cockpits of modern fighter aircraft.

Holography is the technique of producing visual images by means of wavefront reconstruction, especially by using lasers to record on a photographic plate or screen from which a three-dimensional image can be projected. A hologram, or holograph, is the pattern or image generated in this way. EOTech's revolutionary HDS uses a hologram of a reticle pattern recorded on a heads-up display window. When illuminated by laser (an acronym which stands for "Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation") light, the holographic image becomes visible at the target plane, where it



remains in focus with the target and provides instant target acquisition.

EOTech, Inc., which was founded in the summer of 1995, is a subsidiary of the Environmental Research Institute of Michigan (ERIM). ERIM, a non-profit R&D organization, is now 50 years old. For the first 25 years of its existence it was part of the University of Michigan. With 425 scientists on its staff and a support staff of two to three hundred, ERIM conducts core research and development for the U.S. Department of Defense, NASA, and the intelligence community (NSA and CIA). ERIM concentrates on image processing and sensor technology, and more recently, battle surveillance equipment.

ERIM is a think tank, which develops and conducts feasibility studies, but does not manufacture equipment. Ninety percent of their work is classified. Dr. Emmett Leith invented holography at ERIM in 1962. The original Holographic Diffraction Sight was developed under contract with Wright Patterson Air Force base (the Air Force's R&D center) for deployment on helicopter gun ships in Vietnam and for anti-aircraft weaponry. At that time the unit cost approximately \$800 and had a 4x5-inch window, which made it unfeasible for small arms applications.

This holographic technology was shelved and then revived in 1994. An agreement was reached in 1996 with Bushnell for the commercial market. In 1998 EOTech introduced the archery equivalent of the HDS and about a year later they entered the law enforcement and military arena.

Manufactured entirely in the Unites States, the EOTech HDS is a transmissiontype hologram and thus projects what appears to be an illuminated reticle pattern directly on the target. Yet no forward light







Mud or other obstructions do not affect the operator's ability to effectively see the reticle pattern and engage targets, even if the display window is almost completely covered.

is actually projected. To me, the HDS's most important salient feature is the operator's ability to acquire the target without regard to a cheek weld or consistent alignment of the shooter's eye, the sight's reticle pattern and the target. No matter how you move your head and eye about, the reticle pattern will always remain in exactly the same place on the target. This is an incredibly important phenomenon, especially when rapid and accurate target acquisition under stress becomes literally a matter of life and death during a gunfight.

Mud or other obstructions do not affect the operator's ability to effectively see the reticle pattern and engage targets, even if the display window is almost completely covered. The heads-up display window is 3/8-inch thick, with 3 panes of glass bonded together to form a shatterproof laminate. The two outside panes have an anti-reflective coating. The Model 550 HDS sent to The Small Arms Review for test and evaluation was equipped with the standard reticle, which is a two-dimensional ring (65 MOA in diameter) with tick marks and a center 1 MOA dot. Custom reticles are available. The exit aperture is 45 degrees.

After adjustment of elevation and windage zero, you simply look through the

sight assembly's window; place the reticle image on the target, and fire. The eye relief on the Model 550 HDS is an incredible 1-inch to infinity. Both the elevation and windage adjustments are in 1/2 MOA click increments.

In a tactical environment the operator's peripheral vision is almost unlimited and up to 50% on each side of the target. That's because there is no tube, the reticle window remains close to the eye, and the large reticle pattern neither covers up nor obscures the target. As no light is cast upon the target, there is no signature to compromise the operator's position. Glint screens (sometimes referred to as Anti-Reflection Devices) are not necessary.

The Model 550 HDS has 20 levels of brightness adjustment in the normal visual spectrum. When the sight is turned on, the brightness level is automatically set at the factory to level 12. There is also an auto shutdown mode and the unit will automatically shut itself off eight hours after the last push-button control has been pressed. The user can also program the HDS for a four-hour shutdown mode. Two commonly available Type N 1.5-volt batteries power the HDS and an AA battery option is now available, although this increases the size of the unit. As the batteries run down the

reticle brightness will remain at the set intensity and then shut down abruptly.

Recoil testing equipment at the EOTech plant simulates the recoil of the .454 Casull (3,500 Gs for 0.5 milliseconds). Every single HDS goes through this grueling recoil test bed to ensure proper certification.

Key advantages of the new Model 500 series are a significantly reduced price and a 33% reduction in weight and length. The original Model 400 series HDS was 6 inches in length and weighed 9.1 ounces. The new Model 500 series units are 4 inches in length and weigh only 6.4 ounces. The reduction in length now permits night vision equipment to be more easily mounted in back of the HDS - an important consideration for law enforcement and military end users. In addition the brightness range has been increased from a ratio of 2,000:1 to 28,000:1, a 14X increase in the dynamic range and a very dramatic increase in low light environments. The battery cap is now tooless; battery life has been increased by 40% to 70 hours; a builtin sun shield added as well as a filter for night vision compatibility that has a quick engage on/off feature. The unit is submersible to 10 feet indefinitely and will withstand almost any conceivable tactical environment. The battery check indicator is automatic at start up.

The basic difference between the law enforcement/military Models 510 and 550 is their respective night vision compatibility. The Tactical Law Enforcement Model 510 can work coincidently with Gen II and some Gen II+ night vision gear, but only at Level 1 and maybe at Level 2. Furthermore, the operator must scroll down to the night vision spectrum. The spectacular Model 550 has been designed to work with Gen III, Gen III+ and the soon to be released Gen IV night vision equipment. This unit has a third switch on the membrane pad that instantly drops the unit to the NV spectrum. There are ten settings within the NV spectrum. This is critical due to varying tube sensitivities, user's eye sensitivities and ambient light scenarios. Neither of these two units emits any muzzle side light signature. The agency price of the Model 510 is \$299, while that of the Model 550 is \$339. EOTech's Model 550 HDS leads the pack and no other illuminatedreticle-pattern combat sight, at this time, even comes close. This unit is usable with head-mounted night vision goggles. At the present time elite U.S. Army Special Forces groups, as well as European and Asian Special Forces organizations are fielding HDS units.

