

# FN'S 'PATROL BOLT RIFLE' (PBR)

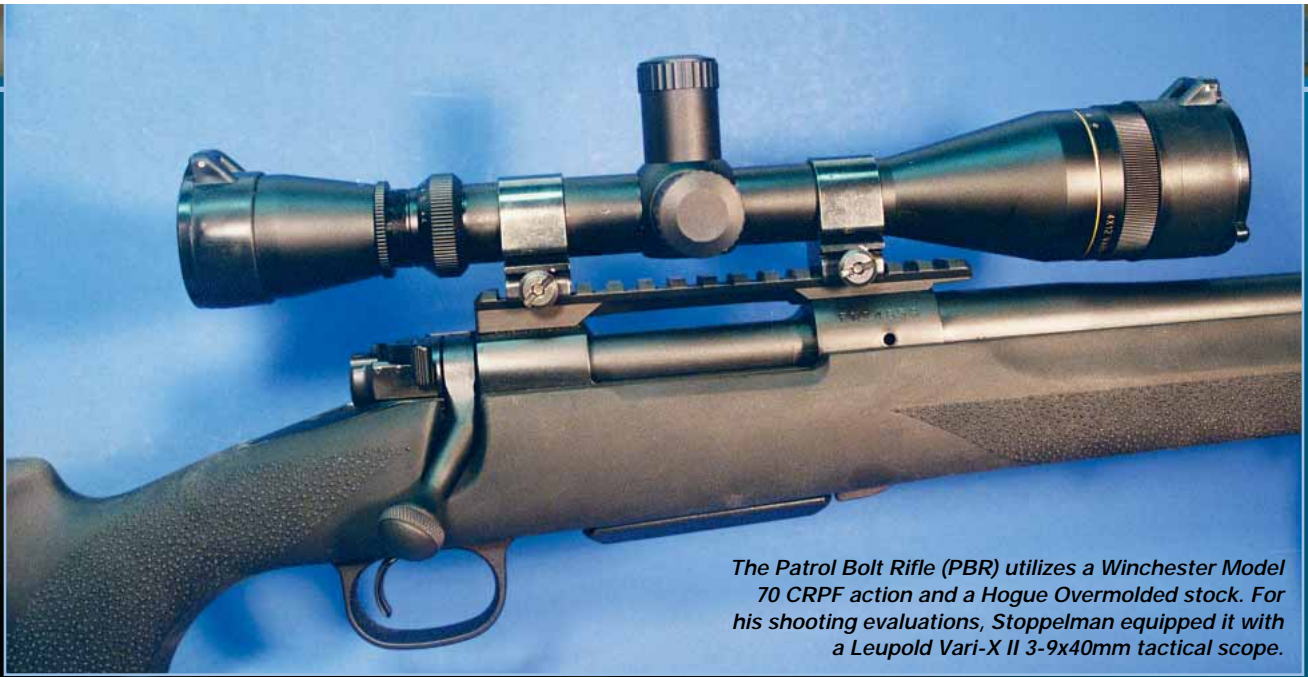
A practical choice for situations demanding a designated marksman

By Scott Stoppelman

In preparing to review this rifle for *GUN WORLD* magazine I posed the question to FN that many might want answered: Since the PBR and Special Police Rifle are built around a Model 70 Winchester action and barrel, how will the recent closing of the plant that made these actions affect availability of FN rifles so based? FNH/USA Marketing Manager Sarah Perry assured me that this contingency had been dealt with and that no shortage of rifles was anticipated.

With that out of the way, let's take a look at FN's PBR tactical/sniper rifle. As already noted, the heart of the PBR rifle is a Model 70 Winchester action (short) of the late type known as a controlled-round-push-feed, or CRPF. The main difference between this action and an original pre-64 action is the lack of the long non-rotating Mauser type extractor. Instead, the post-64 type extractor is present. However, the bolt face is opened up at the bottom to allow the case rim to slip up under the extractor in a way similar to the pre-64 action or Mauser. This CRPF type action also dispenses with the plunger ejector in favor of the blade type that rides in a groove in the bottom of the bolt face similar to





*The Patrol Bolt Rifle (PBR) utilizes a Winchester Model 70 CRPF action and a Hogue Overmolded stock. For his shooting evaluations, Stoppelman equipped it with a Leupold Vari-X II 3-9x40mm tactical scope.*

the pre-64. This is an improvement over the original Mauser style (sacri-legel) as it does not require slotting the left/upper-locking lug for the ejector. While it's true that failures of the Mauser slotted lug are almost unheard of, why weaken one of the two lugs if not necessary? Thus we have an interesting blend of the old and the new in this rifle.

The safety is the standard Model 70 three-position style that most are familiar with. Forward is "fire," the middle position allows manipulation of the bolt for loading and unloading while remaining on safe

and fully rearward locks both trigger and bolt. No better safety system exists as far as many shooters are concerned. The trigger too is Model 70 all the way and fully adjustable by the user. Since this was a borrowed rifle and tinkering was not authorized, I did not mess with this one. There was really no need to anyway. Although it did break in the vicinity of 6 pounds, it proved very crisp with no slack. It is a fairly wide grooved-face trigger and quite comfortable; it did not feel as heavy as the scale indicated.

The PBR uses a detachable box



*The barrel has a countersunk muzzle to protect the lands so critical to good accuracy.*



*The famous three-position Model 70 safety is shown here in the rearward (fully engaged) position.*



*The FN PBR is a bolt-action rifle designed for law enforcement when precise shooting is demanded. Scoped and equipped with a tactical sling and Harris bipod, it should be ready for its intended mission.*

magazine holding 4 rounds of .308 Winchester and is disengaged by pulling rearward a latch which resides just ahead of the magazine on the underside of the rifle. It requires a bit of force to unlatch the magazine, but it is not too demanding. I find this far preferable to having the magazine pop out unexpectedly. The magazine must be removed from the rifle for

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loading since it would be extremely awkward to try to load it through the action port, especially with the scope rail in place. Actual loading of the magazine seems a little labor-intensive and is done in a manner similar to loading a .22 box magazine: pushing the follower down with one finger or the base of the cartridge and with the other hand sliding the rim of the case under the magazine lips and pushing it rearward. Cartridges cannot be simply pushed straight down onto the follower as this will damage the feed lips, which would likely cause "pop-ups." It's easier for me to load a conventional top-load magazine because that's what I'm used to. At any rate once the magazine is loaded, feeding of the cartridges into the chamber is smooth and trouble-free. As on the post-64 style of action a round can simply be placed in the chamber or even just tossed into the action port and then pushed into the chamber from there, and the extractor easily snaps over the rim. It worked very well whichever way I tried with no problems. The box magazine is all steel with the exception of the follower which is some type of polymer.

From a tactical standpoint the wisdom of the detachable box magazine is obvious. Having more than one magazine allows the shooter to have different loadings



The maker's name and model designation are boldly marked on both the barrel and action.

readily available in his kit for specific application. For instance, some situations may call for shooting through glass or perhaps a car body, and certain bullet designs will perform better under those conditions.

With a couple of spare mags handy, it's a simple matter to switch out as needed rather than having to deal with the dumping and manually reloading of loose rounds. Extra mags are available from FN distributors.

The bolt stop/release is again Model 70 style requiring a simple push forward and down on it to release the bolt from the action. The bolt body itself has two gas relief



The classic Model 70 action should be familiar to many readers. The bolt stop/release is visible here at the rear of the receiver.

holes to funnel gasses down into the magazine in the rare event of a cartridge failure.

The stock on the PBR rifle is supplied by Hogue, and it is a dandy! It's a synthetic stock, which is typical of contemporary tactical rifles, and like some others it incorporates an aluminum bedding block that mates to the action. This bedding block is a bit more elaborate than some: Besides just supporting the action itself an aluminum rib runs all the way forward through the fore-end, thus providing more support than some other bedding-block designs. The stock itself is also "overmolded" with a rubber "skin" with pebbled grip enhancement panels in the appropriate places.

## ACCURACY RESULTS

| LOADS                              | ACCURACY* | COMMENTS                       |
|------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|
| Black Hills Red Box 168-gr.        | 1.71"     | one flyer in each group        |
| Black Hills Gold 168-gr. A-Max     | 1.32"     |                                |
| Black Hills Blue Box 175-gr. Match | 1.4"      | called flyer in one group      |
| Black Hills Gold 180-gr. Accu-Bond | 0.852"    |                                |
| Hornady 168-gr. Match              | 0.85"     |                                |
| Federal 168-gr. Match              | 0.782"    |                                |
| Federal 175-gr. Match              | 1.39"     | single group                   |
| Remington 168-gr. Match            | 0.782"    | smallest single group of .453" |

\*Average of two four-shot groups



The adjustment screw nuts have been epoxied by the factory. The trigger pull was comparatively heavy at 6 pounds but crisp and clean.



The rifle comes with a Picatinny rail for easy scope mounting. Two gas-escape holes in the bolt body can be seen beneath it.



A study in bolt faces (from left): Pre-1964 Model 70, post-1964 Model 70, Controlled Round Push Feed Model 70 (as used on the PBR), Mauser Model 98.

The overall result is a stock that enhances accuracy, feels good in the hands and handles well. To soften the already mild recoil of a fairly heavy .308 is a very cushiony recoil pad. The recoil of this rifle seems not too much more than that a lightweight .30-30. The one-piece trigger-guard, also steel, is supported by aluminum on the bottom as well. The stock is provided with one swivel stud at rear and two up front; one for the sling and one for the attachment of a bipod. This arrangement is seen on many contemporary tactical-type rifles.

The fully free-floating barrels on these rifles are 4140 chrome-moly steel, hammer-forged with four lands and grooves and given a right hand twist of 1:12. That twist is in my experience about ideal for a .308 rifle, especially if one expects to shoot bullets heavier than 155 grains. The tightest groups this author has fired have been in this caliber with that twist, though by some twist formulas it may not be ideal. Barrel length on the sample rifle is 22 inches as requested. Other lengths available include 18, 20, and 24 inches and



The Hogue Overmolded stock has pebble-like texturing in lieu of checkering.

there is even a recoil reducer available on the 16- and 18-inch barrels only. In the PBR you can have any caliber you want as long as it is .308 Winchester, the standard sniper round except for a brand new model, the XP (Extreme Performance) sporting a green Hogue stock and fluted

## SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer/Importer:  
FNH USA  
Dept. GW  
P.O. Box 697  
McLean, VA  
(703) 288-1292  
www.fnusa.com

**Action Type:** Bolt-action rifle  
**Caliber:** .308 Winchester/7.62 NATO  
.300 WSM (XP model)  
**Capacity:** Four  
**Barrel Length:** 22 inches  
(as tested, others available)  
**Overall Length:** 42.5 inches  
**Weight:** 9.5 pounds  
**Stock:** Hogue Overmolded  
**Weight:** 9.5 lbs. empty  
**Sights:** Picatinny rail for  
scope mounting  
**MSRP:** Basic PBR, \$1075.00  
XP .300 WSM, \$1245.00

barrel that is offered in .300 WSM. Barrel lengths will be 20 and 24 inches. The FN Special Police Rifle, however, is available in other chamberings.

Range sessions with the PBR rifle were an altogether pleasant experience. To the test rifle I

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mounted an older Leupold Vari-X II 4-12AO scope with factory installed target knobs. As the rifle comes factory equipped with an M1913-style Picatinny rail, mounting was straightforward and the scope fastened to it easily with standard Weaver rings. The

on the first shoot was also the heaviest bullet weight tried. That was the Black Hills "Gold" load with the 180-grain Nosler Accu-Bond bullet. Four shots went into just under 3/4 of an inch. On a subsequent shoot groups were tighter overall, and the tightest groups were fired as well. The best groups came by way of Remington's 168-grain Match load

less with five rounds. The PBR comes with a 1.5 MOA guarantee, and the SPR rifle comes in at 1 MOA. For comparison, Remington requires its Model 700-based PSS tactical rifle to shoot 3/4 MOA with a factory load before it is shipped. As there are surely more PSS or similar 700-based rifles in the hands of snipers in the military and police



The full-length aluminum bedding block of the Hogue stock extends through the length of the fore-end and offers support in the critical recoil lug area.

Weaver rings may not be very sexy, but they work just fine. All range testing was done at 100 yards off sandbags, hand-held with the scope set at 10X throughout.

This must be a lucky rifle! After an initial visual bore sighting without the use of any devices, the first round out of the rifle landed about one-half inch from the target's center. Figuring this to be a fluke, I triggered another round and it landed less than an inch from the first and still in the target's X-ring! This has never happened to me before, and throughout all the testing the scope's adjustments were not touched. Of course not all the groups were in the X-ring but they were close enough for our purposes. Those two sight-in rounds came courtesy of Remington's "yellow box" 150-grain FMJ military ball load, by the way.

After that auspicious beginning, I was afraid things would go south from there, but I need not have worried as the PBR soon divested itself of any question about its quality and accuracy. All the factory loads tried did well, but, of course, some did better than others. The last group fired



The detachable box magazine is shown while still attached to the floorplate.

along with Federal and Hornady offerings. The overall results can be seen in the accuracy chart. By the time I got to the aforementioned 180-grain "Gold" load near the end of the second shoot, the recoil was starting to have an effect on me. Not from this rifle, mind you. While letting the PBR cool and clean I was shooting a .30-06 sporter with heavier loads, and after a couple of hours on the bench it was beginning to have an effect. Still, that 180-grain load shot under an inch.

When all is said and done, this is one accurate rifle. Certainly it meets the criteria of what most would consider adequate for a modern tactical rifle. Customarily, a tactical/sniper rifle should be able to shoot at least one factory load into one inch at 100 yards (one minute of angle, MOA) or



Rounds must be slipped under the feed lips of the magazine from the front. Snapping them directly downward may damage the feed lips.



Releasing the box magazine is effected by pulling the latch located just ahead of the magazine to the rear.

here and abroad than any other rifle, I think it's fair to use it for comparison. My own PSS will shoot 1/4-inch groups with the handloads it likes and 3/4 MOA with Federal factory Match loadings. As FN did not authorize the use of handloads in the sample PBR, I can't say for sure how it would do. But if the PBR performs like most rifles of this type, it



Here's a sampling of the .308 match ammo used in Stoppelman's accuracy work.

will indeed do better with select handloads and would likely be the equal of the PSS in this regard.

I'm told that specific models of these FN tactical rifles have been adopted by more than a few law enforcement agencies including departments in Ohio, North Carolina, and Alabama, which indicates growing confidence in these models.

Aside from finding the box magazine somewhat awkward to load, I can



Here are three excellent groups fired with 168-grain match loads from three different makers. The four-shot group fired with the Remington loads measures a scant .453-inch.

find little to fault on the PBR rifle. Handling and functioning were fine and accuracy superb for a relatively short and light tactical rifle. The bedding block system used in the Hogue stock is excellent and really does a great job of supporting the barreled action for shot-to-shot consistency. The trigger was a little heavy but very crisp, and I



The best group achieved on the author's first outing measured .725-inch. It was fired with Black Hills loads using Nosler 180-grain AccuBonds.

never felt it caused any blown shots. I know where the blame for flyers usually lies, and it's normally not the gun!

It's a pleasure to review guns that work as designed and advertised. The PBR does just that. It looks good, feels good, and shoots very well with select factory loads. ©