

By Leroy Thompson

FNH's SCAR-16S

Designed and built for SOCOM, it's gotta be good!



Thompson fires the FNH SCAR-16S from the kneeling position; the SCAR-16S is a very handy rifle that lends itself well to firing offhand, kneeling, or prone.



The SCAR lends itself well to use off of the support side shoulder, in Thompson's case the left shoulder.



The SCAR is fast handling for offhand shooting; in this photo Thompson is engaging hanging plates at various distances.



Thompson found the NightForce NXS 1-4x24mm optic very well-suited to the SCAR.

are that the military SCAR-L will replace the M4A1, Mk18 CQBR (Close Quarters Battle Receiver) which is an upper receiver designed primarily for use by the SEALs, and

the Mk12 SPR (Special Purpose Rifle) which has served as a light sniping rifle.

The SCAR's lower receiver is of polymer in FDE (Flat Dark Earth) while the upper is of aluminum with an uninterrupted Picatinny rail on top. Additionally, there are two removable side rails and a lower rail. Any MIL-STD-1913 compliant accessories may be mounted on these rails. The SCAR retains an M4-type pistol grip. The safety switch and magazine release button are ambidextrous and have a raised area around them to prevent inadvertently hitting them. The cocking handle may be switched to suit the operator. I use it on the left side, as will most right-handed shooters. The SCAR takes standard M16 magazines, though the single magazine that comes with the rifle is an "improved" version with an interesting two-tone finish—FDE on the part that protrudes from the mag well and black on the part inside the mag well. The magazine well is flared to allow faster magazine insertions. Multiple sling mounting points grant versatility in use of

I got a chance to shoot the military SCAR (SOC Combat Assault Rifle) a couple of years ago and have anticipated the introduction of the civilian SCAR-16S ever since. I have now been shooting the semi-auto SCAR-16S for a few weeks and can state that I am very impressed with it.

The FN rifle won the SCAR competition to supply a new rifle

to SOCOM (Special Operations Command), and hundreds are already in use with the 75th Ranger Regiment and some other special ops units including the SEALs. Versions of the SCAR will be produced for U.S. military use in 5.56x45mm—the SCAR-L Mk16 Mod 0—and in 7.62x51mm—the SCAR-H Mk17 Mod 0. The semi-auto SCAR-16S available for civilian sale is based on the SCAR-L. Plans



FNH has been a leader in the design and production of automatic and semi-automatic weapons for well over a century, and it's no surprise the SCAR-16S is a fine piece of weaponry that's handsome and distinctive looking with its Flat Dark Earth finish.

SCAR



Here the SCAR's stock is set in the position Thompson prefers—the "3" position. The "square" button at the front of the stock releases the cheek piece for adjustment, and the "half circle" button releases the stock so it may be folded. The "switch-type" button at the rear of the stock allows it to be adjusted for length.



Here's a look at the SCAR's stock in the folded position.

On the military SCAR-L the standard barrel length is just less than 14 inches. There are also versions with 10-inch and 18-inch barrels. To be legal for civilian sales, the SCAR-16S has a 16.25-inch barrel. These are free-floating, cold hammer forged Mil-Spec barrels with a hard-chromed bore and four-prong flash hider.

Disassembly of the SCAR-16S requires a captive takedown pin to be pushed from left to right after which the trigger module may be pushed forward then down for removal. Next, the buttstock module may be removed by pushing downward. Once these two modules are removed, the moving parts

short-stroke piston action with a rotating bolt. This system is designed to reduce fouling and increase reliability. During the SCAR military trials, it did prove substantially more reliable than the M4 used as a control. A gas regulator allows the shooter to adjust for an extremely dirty rifle or light training ammunition, but normally the regulator's position will not need to be changed.



This photo offers a good view of the SCAR's safety, bolt release, and ambidextrous mag release.

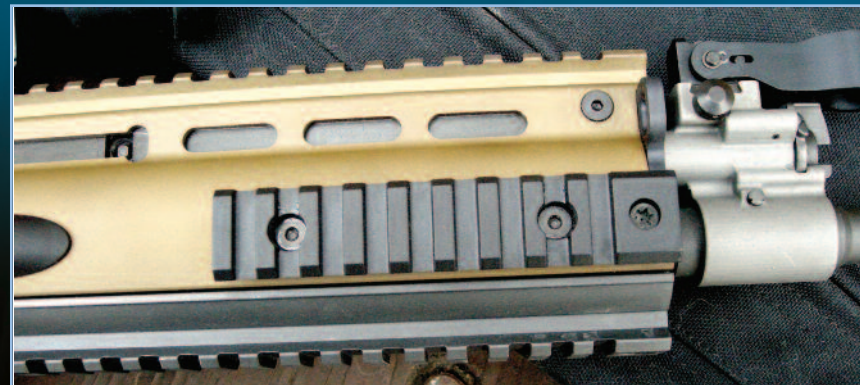
various combat slings. Both front and rear BUIS (Back-up Iron Sights) flip down so they do not interfere with an optical sight.

The stock is very well designed ergonomically as it may be extended to fit the user's arm length but also folds to make the SCAR easier to carry. Note that there is a latch on the right side of the rifle to hold the stock closed. To release the stock from this latch it must be pushed down then pulled outward. An adjustable cheek rest allows the shooter to attain an optimum cheek weld for any optical sight mounted.

The SCAR uses a gas-operated,



Here's close-up look at the SCAR's right-hand magazine release button and ambidextrous safety as well as its pistol grip; the hooked projection above and to the left of the mag release button is the catch for the stock when folded.



One of the SCAR's partial side rails is visible, as is the gas regulator below the front BUIS.



The SCAR's cocking handle may be switched to suit the operator. Here it is installed for operation by the left hand.

assembly may be removed after removing the charging handle and the return spring assembly. This will normally suffice for normal cleaning and oiling, though the very well-written manual also includes instructions for disassembly of the moving parts assembly and removal of the gas regulator and piston to remove fouling. Clear instructions are included in the manual for cleaning and lubricating the rifle as well as for reassembly.

Since I do not intend to put a vertical foregrip on the SCAR-16L, I determined that for comfortable shooting the lower rail would need a cover. I prefer the ladder rails from MagPul when I do not want to make the rails thicker with a cover, so I cut an FDE rubber rail cover to size and added it. I also determined that for



The SCAR features a four-pronged compensator/muzzle brake.

me the length of pull is best on the SCAR if I set the stock on the #3 position, which is easy to determine by numbers visible as the release button is pressed and the stock is pulled to the rear. I found that for me, the cheek rest works best in the closed position.

Until I had installed the optical

sight I intend to use with the SCAR, I could not be sure, however, that these positions would be best for shooting. The SCAR-16S is 37.5 inches overall with stock extended and weighs 7.25 pounds. I find it handy and lively; hence, I wanted an optical sight that would not adversely affect its handling.

But, I also wanted a sight that would give close engagement capability as well as accuracy at longer range. I considered a half-dozen optical sights but decided upon the NightForce NXS 1-4x24mm. This scope offers a good field of view (100 feet at 100 yards on 1X), .25 MOA clicks for both windage and elevation, and NightForce's excellent illuminated



There are dual sling-mounting points at the rear of the SCAR's receiver.

reticle. Overall length is only 8.8 inches while weight is only 17 ounces. There are three reticles available on the NXS 1-4x24 of which I chose the FC-2. This reticle uses a circle with a center dot plus horizontal lines on each side of the circle and a short arrowhead post below. For night shooting the circle and dot are illuminated in red when the illumination dial is turned to one of the nine brightness settings. I have found this reticle very good from 25 to 300 yards. At close

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range, all one has to do is quickly put the circle around the target and engage, while at longer ranges the dot offers precision shot placement. I normally zero this reticle with the center dot on at 200 yards. NightForce scopes are renowned for their sturdiness. Many shooters who put thousands of rounds through .50 BMG rifles swear by NightForce scopes.

NightForce mounts are also known for standing up to a lot of recoil for a long time, so I chose the NF Uni-mount for the NXS 1-4x24.

The SCAR-16S's barrel has a 1 in 7 twist; therefore, 62-grain M855 (SS109) ammunition would be optimum for shooting in it. However, due to the high cost of .223/5.56x45mm ammo as I write this, especially SS109, I felt that



The NightForce NXS 1-4x24 scope is a top-quality optic ideally suited for this rifle; the rear BUIS is in the raised position here.



This five-shot, 200-yard 4.5-inch group fired with Winchester 55-grain ammo is fairly typical of those obtained with the SCAR-16S.



Thompson takes aim from behind left-hand cover to show how well the SCAR-16S may be used from the support-side shoulder.

most owners of a SCAR-16S would shoot primarily M193 55-grain ammunition. Therefore, I took along Winchester 55-grain FMJ ammunition. I also stuck in one magazine of M855 green tip ammo. My plan is to shoot the SCAR-16S with 55-grain ammo for right now but to see how much I will have to change zero on the NightForce to use 62-grain ammo.

By the time I got the NightForce scope zeroed at 200 yards, it had started to rain, but I decided that if the SCAR is intended for U.S. special operators, it should stand up



When firing from the left-side shoulder the forefinger can readily work the ambidextrous mag release button.



The support-side hand may be used to quickly change a magazine by depressing the release button and pulling on the magazine.

well to rain. The Rangers' standard comment on training in the rain used to be, "I never saw a rusty Ranger!" The rain came down, and I kept shooting. At 200 yards, my better five-shot groups from a rest were in the 4- to 5-inch range, which is typical of the groups I've been hearing about from friends who have shot the SCAR-16S. When I had shot a friend's SCAR-16S a couple of months previously, we had been getting similar groups. I had some SS109 ammo along at that time, and we tried it and got a 200-yard group that was a bit tighter, as I remember around 3.5 inches.

Basically, the SCAR-16S seems to be about a 2 MOA rifle, though I'm

sure there are shooters who can and have bettered that. I will do more shooting with SS109 ammo and hope to tighten my groups up a bit. As a real test, I'll try some Black Hills 77-grain ammunition that is generally among the most accurate 5.56x45mm ammo I've tried. That is for another shooting session, however. Let me note, though, that I am not disappointed in 200-yard groups around 4 inches with the SCAR-16S. That's good accuracy for a self-loading rifle shooting standard-production 5.56 ammo.

I did a lot of shooting at hanging

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down on the magazine. The stock is extremely comfortable and offers a really good cheek weld for me.

Since the SCAR-16S is designed to be ambidextrous, I did some shooting off of the support side shoulder and tried using the SCAR around left-side cover. Since I am right-eye dominant and normally shoot with both eyes open, I did have to close my right eye while using the NightForce when shooting from the left shoulder, but I managed and was hitting the 100-yard plate around a third of the time from my left side. Working the safety with my left hand was easy. I did, however, have to use my left hand to operate the cocking handle, as I could not comfortably reach over or under the SCAR to operate it with my right hand.

Overall, I like the SCAR-16S a lot. It is a very user-friendly rifle that looks very tactical. I like its looks a lot, and I like shooting it a lot. It is already one of my favorite semi-auto battle rifles. As I write this, supply has not caught up to demand for the SCAR-16S, so prices tend to be high—retail and above. However, I would expect that as FNH continues to ship, rifles prices will come down somewhat. The SCAR-16S is not a cheap rifle in construction and design or in price. I am willing to pay for quality and design, however. Now, what I can't wait for is the semi-auto SCAR-17S in .308 to become available. **GW**