

News flash for those who have recently returned to Earth from another planet:

The AR small arms family—which includes the M16 rifle and M4 carbine—hasn't exactly been covering itself with glory in the War on Terror presently being waged in Afghanistan, Iraq and other charm spots around the globe.

Issues of both reliability and lethality have commonly been reported from warriors at the sharp end of the spear. To rectify at least some of these issues, the military has quietly been withdrawing M14 rifles from storage and issuing them by the thousands. Unlike the ARs, M14s have a proven track record of reliability and lethality, plus the capability of penetrating cinderblock and mud-brick structures that have

proven impervious to 5.56mm rounds.

Of course the M14 isn't without issues of its own.

The M14 was never intended to accept the many accessories that characterize modern tactical operations and, although there are modular stocks for the M14, they do not solve the M14's basic problems. What's worse, there aren't any more M14s left to issue, and tooling to make new ones to military standard no longer exists. In addition, the supply of M14 parts is drying up.

Things have gotten so bad that the military has been requesting that some M14s previously transferred to law enforcement agencies be returned. New production is pretty much out of the

question, as the M14 is a *very* expensive rifle to manufacture, being essentially a modified version of the venerable M1 Garand, a rifle that was originally designed in the late 1920s and first issued to troops in 1936.

This isn't to say that there aren't quality commercial versions of the M14. There are, but getting them certified to full military specification would be very expensive, and our military would still be equipped with a rifle that had its origins in the 1930s. If our military is to have a .308 rifle, it should be state of the art.

Enter POF-USA.

For several years, Patriot Ordnance Factory USA (POF-USA) has been manufacturing AR-type rifles and car-

PATRIOT ACT



biners that not only have a very simple and reliable gas piston/operating rod system, C.R.O.S.™ (Corrosion Resistant Operating System), but that also operate without lubrication of any kind. As far-fetched as this may sound, I have had a POF-USA P415 for long-term test and evaluation and have yet to clean or lubricate it other than to wipe the internal parts with a dry shop towel to remove what little fouling gets into the receiver.

As tested, the anodized receiver's interior is plated with electroless silicon nickel, and the other operating components are hard chromed, nitrided, or NP3™ plated—they are self-lubricating and nothing sticks to them. NP3™ is a process that combines sub-micron par-

ticles of PTFE (Teflon) and electroless nickel, and is a product of Robar. (POF also offers its weapons with both upper and lower receivers NP3™ plated.) POF, however, has taken the AR to what may well be its ultimate level with the P308 because, as good as the P415 is, the P308 is even better.

The P308 retains most of the features that have led to the P415's success and then some. The P308's receiver uses the same coatings as the P415, but there the similarity ends. The P308's bolt carrier is heat-treated and plated with NP3™, and the bolt is hard-chromed.

The P308's barrel and barrel extension are heat-treated by a proprietary process that POF CEO Frank Desomma refers to

POF-USA P308

» BY CHARLIE CUTSHAW
» PHOTOS BY DOUG RICHARDSON



Cutshaw sends rounds downrange and brass flying from short-barreled P308. Carbine proved totally reliable and remarkably accurate.

P308 disassembly for cleaning and maintenance is straightforward, although POF's C.R.O.S.™ operating system minimizes need for lubrication and maintenance.



Standard Vltor Modstock incorporates ergonomic cheek rests, compartments for storing small items and adjustment for length of pull.



SureFire muzzle brake flash suppressor reduces muzzle blast, flash signature and muzzle rise.



P308 has ambidextrous bolt release adjacent to mag latch for operation with shooter's trigger finger.





▲ POF-USA P308 combines tried-and-true AR platform with innovations to be found nowhere else, including totally reliable gas-piston/op-rod operating system, capability to accept full range of accessories such as Horus Vision Talon tactical optic and SureFire M900 pistol grip/weapon light. M900 has infrared filter for use with night-vision optics. P308 required no lubrication whatsoever to achieve its remarkable reliability. P308 also accepts state-of-the-art night-vision optics such as OSTI's Tactical Night Sight (TaNS) for 24/7 operations.

as "deep nitride heat treatment." While Frank is understandably reluctant to divulge the exact nature of the process, the results are obvious. The treatment penetrates the barrel steel to a depth of three to five thousandths of an inch and gives a surface hardness of Rockwell 68-72.

To put this in context, hard chrome has a surface hardness of Rockwell 65-68, but there are issues with hard chrome that make it less than ideal for rifle barrels, primarily that hard chrome has surface irregularities that cannot be eliminated, which is the primary reason that match rifle barrels are almost universally plain chrome-molybdenum or stainless steel.

POF's deep nitride treatment, on the other hand, has zero imperfections and is

incredibly smooth. For this reason, P308 barrels are regularly achieving remarkable accuracy that literally has to be seen to be believed. I'll discuss this in depth below. The deep nitride process also virtually eliminates fouling of any kind, copper included. As hard as this may be to believe, the durability and accuracy of the new POF P308 has been documented in formal testing.

My P308 test resulted in shot groups that are more in keeping with a bolt-action precision tactical rifle than a gas-operated carbine. The test carbine with 14.5-inch (16 inches with fixed muzzle brake) barrel shot sub-minute of angle groups out of the box with no break-in period other than a few test rounds at the factory prior to shipment to verify function and a few rounds to get the Horus Vision optic zeroed. My test groups were achieved using a 1-4X24mm Horus Vision "Talon" optic identical to that used by some special operations operators.

I already mentioned the P308 gas system that is functionally identical to

that of the POF P415. The system consists of a gas piston and operating rod. When it becomes necessary to clean the gas system, disassemble simply by rotating the FAL-type plug a quarter turn while depressing the spring-loaded latch and pull it out of the gas cylinder. The piston and operating rod then just fall out when the rifle is pointed muzzle down. Any carbon buildup in the gas system can be removed with a Scotch Brite pad. No solvent is needed to clean the P308, nor is any lubrication needed.

As good as the improved gas system is, it's only the beginning of the P308 story.

The bolt carrier has been modified for increased reliability and accuracy. The bolt carrier surfaces that ride on the upper receiver are somewhat larger than conventional ones, while maintaining recesses to accommodate any fouling that might accumulate. Also, the rear portion of the bolt carrier is essentially unstressed and so has lightening cuts as a weight-saving measure. Every effort

SHOOTING RESULTS: POF-USA P308

AMMO	HIGH VELOCITY	LOW VELOCITY	AVERAGE VELOCITY	EXTREME SPREAD	STANDARD DEVIATION	AVERAGE GROUP SIZE
Black Hills 168-gr. HPBT	2590 fps	2453 fps	2509 fps	137 fps	41	0.45 inch
Remington 165-gr. HPBT	2612 fps	2564 fps	2580 fps	48 fps	13	0.6 inch
Winchester 168-gr. HPBT	2516 fps	2486 fps	2502 fps	30 fps	11	0.55 inch

Testing conducted at Florence, AL, Police Department Range, temperature 45 degrees F, range 100 yards. Ballistic data collected using Oehler 35 chronograph. Group size average of two three-shot groups.

has been made to make the P308 as light as possible and still maintain reliability and accuracy.

As a top-end AR-type rifle, the P308 has virtually all the features to make the rifle as close to perfection as possible. A unique feature is the P308's ambidextrous bolt release, which allows the shooter to drop the bolt with his trigger finger after having inserted a magazine into the mag well—a significant development in terms of ergonomics.

My test rifle came with a two-stage match trigger that broke like the proverbial glass rod at precisely 3.5 pounds with zero creep or backlash.

Another standard feature is Vltor's Modstock. The Modstock is available in several colors and configurations, including black, flat dark earth and OD green. There are two collapsible Modstocks—standard and clubfoot. The clubfoot version, like that on my test carbine, facilitates using the off hand to pull the stock into the shoulder for greater stability. Vltor's waterproof compartments can

be accessed with the stock on the carbine. The compartment adapters provide a flat surface for an excellent cheek weld. The Vltor Modstock is extremely comfortable and also raises one's line of sight to an ideal level for either open sights or optics.

However, the improvements don't end with comfort and utility. Vltor also redesigned the latch on both the standard and clubfoot configured stocks and several different sling options. The standard M4 sling can be used, but the Modstock has a provision for Uncle Mike's quick-detach sling swivels, one of which is provided in the Modstock modification kit, and can be fitted to either side of the stock. The Modstock has been adopted by several special operations units.

POF magazines are interchangeable with C-Products, DPMS and Knight's Armament SR-25 magazines. Basically all you need to complete the P308 as a tactical carbine suitable for just about any situation are an optic and night vision, so the rifle is capable of true 24/7

operations, in keeping with today's military and law enforcement tactics.

The military is gradually eliminating traditional iron sights in favor of optics whose technology has brought them to the point where they are virtually as reliable and rugged as iron sights. In addition to being faster, optics eliminate the need to align three separate elements as with open sights—rear sight, front sight and target. With an optic, just place the optic's reticle on the target and shoot it, though the shooter must still correctly estimate range and windage.

The Horus Vision Talon 1-4X24mm optic provides quick target acquisition at CQB distances while enhancing target identification and hit probability out to 800 meters.

The Horus Talon one power (1X) setting allows the shooter the largest field of view and the ability to shoot with both eyes open. The system is designed to give the shooter a sighting system that dramatically increases his speed of target acquisition and neutralization. Since the Talon reticle is in the first focal plane, the targeting and ranging grid can be used at any magnification.

When engaging targets at close ranges, the shooter should use one power (1X) for maximum field of view. At this magnification, the bold ghost ring visually becomes a very large aiming dot. The central dot essentially disappears. Once a target enters his field of view, the shooter places the circular reticle on the target and fires. To use the Horus Talon, the shooter keeps both eyes open, shoulders his rifle, aims and fires.

When using the Horus Talon reticle

⟨ SOURCES ⟩

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