

FN Herstal: a unique product and service portfolio

Soldier Mod talks to FN Herstal about their renowned product range and more recent developments

Q: FN Herstal is a globally recognized designer and manufacturer of military small arms. Please remind our readers who FN Herstal is and what you do.

A: We have made guns for over 130 years; we make guns, and also design and develop them. We also invent complementary products and technologies, ammunition, accessories, mountings, maintenance equipment, etc. Broadly speaking, we offer our customers a unique product and service portfolio. Born in 1889 in Herstal, near Liege in Belgium, FN inherited skills acquired by gunmakers over centuries. To supply 150,000 Mauser rifles the traditional craftsmen of the area had to adapt to mass production of a very different type of weapon. They did this by combining skilled workers, highly trained engineers, modern industrial technology and top-quality materials. Then, working alongside the great John Moses Browning our engineers learned innovative gun design. These are still vital ingredients for success. Existing designs can ensure success today, but creating new products is essential to ensure a future. Quality production and innovative research and development will always be FN Herstal's key assets in which we invest heavily.

Q: Is the company still based in its original birthplace in Belgium?

A: Yes, and it has gone global over the years. FN became an international company by creating or acquiring sites outside Belgium. Contrary to modern trends globalisation was not for cheaper production at the expense of quality. FN America, FNH UK and Noptel in Finland bring quality capacity, closer contacts with customers, and expertise in electronic and laser technologies.

Q: Can you describe your product and capabilities portfolio?

A: We design, develop and manufacture guns, a full range from pistols to heavy machine guns; and much more as the business has evolved over the decades. This includes integrated weapon systems for airborne, land and naval applications for instance.

The **FN Five-seven® pistol** and **FN P90® submachine gun** combine modern materials, ergonomic design and



FN SCAR®-L assault rifle (5.56x45mm NATO cal) with underbarrel 40mm grenade launcher and FN® FCU Mk3 fire control unit

the high-performance FN® 5.7x28mm cartridge to deliver exceptional combat capability.

The **FN SCAR® rifle** family includes subcompact carbines in 5.56x45mm NATO and .300 BLK, assault rifles in 5.56x45mm and 7.62x51mm NATO, and 7.62x51mm NATO precision rifles. It covers all roles from personal defense, close combat, regular infantry, special forces, to designated marksmen and snipers. The open architecture and modularity of the FN SCAR® and its exceptional performance benefit users. The ability to meet all needs with variants of the same weapon simplifies training, maintenance and logistics.

The **FN40GL® grenade launcher** in a standalone configuration or mounted on the FN SCAR® fires 40mm low velocity or medium velocity grenades.

Q: FN Herstal's machine guns are world famous.

A: Yes! We possess a full range of machine guns. The **FN MINIMI® Light Machine Gun** is the reference in its category. It has consistently proved itself in combat thanks to its excellent volume of fire/weight ratio. It is available in various configurations in both 7.62x51mm and 5.56x45mm NATO calibres.

The **FN MAG® Medium Machine Gun** has proved so superior to any other 7.62x51mm NATO medium/general purpose machine gun that the only real choice for customers is between guns from FN, the original designer and manufacturer, or unlicensed copies.

The **FN® M2HB-QCB Heavy Machine Gun** in 12.7x99mm NATO (.50 Cal) is the Browning design upgraded for a fast



FN MINIMI® 7.62 Mk3 Tactical light machine gun (7.62x51mm NATO cal)

barrel change and eliminates user headspace gauging. In service with many forces it is the most widely used weapon of its type.

The **FN® M3 Machine Gun** in 12.7x99mm calibre is a lighter version adapted for use on aircraft, ships and boats, and vehicles. Firing at an exceptional 1,100 RPM cyclic rate this self-powered weapon is ideal for many roles.

To accompany these weapons, FN Herstal provides accessories and ancillary equipment. Some are from specialized manufacturers, others are FN designed and made: the **FN® e-novation** product range for instance.

Q: FN® e-novation, what is this?

A: More than 10 years ago, FN Herstal embarked on a complementary offering with the first FN® shot counter and FN® fire control unit. Over time a wide portfolio of products and services has emerged under the so-called **FN® e-novation** umbrella, that includes solutions for **aiming, training** and **small arms fleet management**. Electronics on weapons must withstand the same impacts, temperatures, immersion, sand, mud, etc. as the weapon and function reliably despite vibrations, recoil and acceleration forces generated by firing. Designers need expertise and experience in both electronics and weapons. Our in-house teams have this combination of unique skills.

Q: Can you describe the FN® e-novation solutions?

A: The **FN® FCU Mk3 fire control unit** converts 40mm low or medium velocity grenade launchers with a reputation for poor accuracy into precision weapons. A laser range finder and sensors provide range, slope angle and temperature data to the ballistic calculator that determines the angle of launch. The illuminated reticle in the optical sight automatically moves into position to give first round hits, in all conditions, day and night.

The **FN® ballistic calculator** can be used on rifles and machine guns. Its range finder and calculator provide information for correct sight adjustment. It includes adjustable-power visible and infrared aiming lasers and a variable beam angle IR illuminator. Wired or wireless communication with other devices is possible.

The **FN® Expert training system** is easy to set up anywhere, it can be used with simulated (airsoft) or service rifles with dry, blank, or live firing. Measuring and displaying weapon alignment before, during and after the shot enables users or instructors to determine hits or misses and diagnose

marksmanship errors. Ideal for basic training, it also allows tactical training.

Q: You mentioned small arms management previously.

A: Yes; the **FN® SAM small arms management** solution is a means of ensuring efficient and cost-effective maintenance, logistical support and data management for a fleet of small arms. It is based on:

- **FN SmartCore® shot counters** in weapons acting as electronic logbooks.
- **Weapon data storage** in the FN SmartCore® or RFID tags for reliable recording of weapon transfers.
- **Software** that provides armourers with documents, prompting for preventive maintenance, maintenance and firing history, and gives fleet managers a clear view of the location and operational condition of weapons. Time is saved, operational availability of assets – weapons and accessories – is improved, life cycle cost is reduced to name just a few benefits.

Q: You said earlier that FN Herstal does weapon systems for air, land and sea carriers as well. How so?

A: Absolutely. To fire machine guns from air, land and sea carriers mountings must be well designed to ensure reliable functioning and to avoid damage to the carrier. Who better than a long-standing designer and manufacturer of machine guns like FN to achieve this?

FN's integrated weapon systems include:

- **Podded FN® M3P .50 Cal** guns attach to fixed and rotary wing aircraft and are forward firing pilot operated systems.
- **Pintle mounted solutions** for 7.62x51mm and 12.7x99mm guns include helicopter door, window, ramp or external mounts for the FN® M3M .50 Cal.



deFNder® Medium remote weapon station fitted with FN® M3R machine gun, on UGV

- **deFNder® remote weapon stations** for a wide variety of land and naval applications. One of our latest developments includes integration onto UGVs and USVs.

Many integrated weapon systems are tailored to the carrier and/or customer requirements. Full backing is provided during carrier integration and throughout service life.

With customers in about 130 countries and determined to maintain its reputation for quality and innovation, FN Herstal backs its products with **full 360-degree service** to ensure satisfaction. ■

For more information please see: www.fnherstal.com