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

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

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...
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.