

HALO ARMS MAXIMUS .50 BMG



ULTIMATE HYBRID SYSTEM, COMPETITION ACCURACY WITH **MILITARY RUGGEDNESS, BRINGING DOWN HARDENED TARGETS!**

BY CHARLIE CUTSHAW

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When police special tactical units are evaluated by the Department of Homeland Security, the presence or absence of a .50 BMG (Browning Machine Gun) caliber precision rifle is a critical rating factor. While a .50 BMG caliber rifle may seem to be overkill in an urban or even rural environment, there are scenarios in both environments when nothing else will do. Subjects barricaded behind barriers that are impervious to smaller caliber firearms can be defeated with a .50 caliber rifle. For instance, situations where terrorists have taken over the cockpit of an airliner can be alleviated only by using a .50 caliber rifle, since the windscreens

of commercial jet aircraft are designed to resist impacts much like those of smaller caliber rifle bullets. In facilities where bullet-resistant glass is present, such as banks, only a .50 BMG caliber rifle can eliminate threats. Thus, while some might consider a .50 BMG rifle unnecessary in law enforcement, the opposite is true. A .50 BMG rifle is an essential law enforcement tool. Although situations calling for a .50 BMG caliber rifle are relatively rare, when a situation occurs where a .50 BMG caliber rifle is necessary, it is too late to have a SWAT team precision tactical marksman qualified in the use of the big rifle. Unlike the famous LA Shootout where officers borrowed semi-automatic small caliber rifles from sporting goods

stores, .50 BMG rifles aren't very common, even in gun stores. In addition, if a situation arises where a .50 BMG rifle is to be employed, the responsible team member must be thoroughly qualified to use it and must maintain his proficiency so that when the worst happens, the team .50 BMG rifle can be employed without fear of legal repercussions due to training or proficiency issues. Because a firearm without ammunition is no more than a very expensive club, this is another factor in the use of a .50 BMG rifle since ammunition of various types has decidedly different characteristics. All .50 BMG ammunition is capable of defeating targets that would withstand even the most potent bullets of smaller calibers, but the team

leader must choose his ammunition with just as much care as he did the team rifle. Commonly available .50 BMG ammunition includes M2 and M33 ball, M2 armor piercing (AP), M8 armor-piercing incendiary (API), armor-piercing match from Anthena and plain commercial match ammunition. Mark 211 API is also available to law enforcement, but this most potent API has behind target incendiary effects that probably aren't desirable for law enforcement purposes. Of commercially available US military ammo, M8 API is generally considered to be the most accurate, although if used operationally, the incendiary effect must be taken into consideration. The Army has begun purchasing a match-grade round for its

A .50 BMG rifle is an essential law enforcement tool, and the Halo Maximus has some unique features that set it apart from most other .50 BMG rifles. The Maximus is manufactured almost entirely of aluminum alloy and steel, which comprises the barrel, receiver, bolt, fire control components and a few other elements.

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M107 rifles. This round is currently designated the XM1022 and is made by Lake City Army Ammunition Plant. The design is similar of the Anthena armor piercing ammunition tested herein, but without the armor-piercing penetrator. I recommend match-grade ammunition that will defeat hard targets. For tough targets, Anthena AP match ammunition imported by Drake Associates probably represents the best balance of accuracy and terminal effects, although it is expensive. I have fired Anthena AP Match bullets against inch-thick armor steel at 300 meters distance and not only did every round penetrate with enough behind armor effect to be lethal, the three-round groups we fired could be covered with the palm of our hand. In one group, two rounds were actually touching. The Anthena AP has been ordered in large quantities (over 5,000 rounds) by a major U.S. police department for harbor protection and is in use by several federal law enforcement agencies.

Gun Details

When it comes to rifles suitable for law enforcement use against hard targets, the selection is limited. One of these is the Halo Arms Maximus, which is a large

rifle—but when dealing with a cartridge that launches a half-inch diameter bullet weighing as much as 750 grains at nearly 3,000 feet per second (fps), the rifle that shoots it is also going to be big—and heavy. The Maximus is nearly 5 feet in length with a standard 30-inch chrome molybdenum steel barrel. A carbine version with 22-inch barrel is also available.

The empty as tested weight of our Maximus was 32.5 pounds including scope, mount and bipod, so this is obviously not a rifle that will be fired from the offhand standing position. In fact, there are no rifles in this class of which I am aware that can be fired in any position other than a supported position of some sort, usually prone. The Halo Maximus' weight is one factor that contributes to the lack of felt recoil, but more important is the rifle's aggressive muzzle brake that counters recoil by essentially pulling the rifle forward as the bullet leaves the muzzle. We fired



The Halo Maximus uses a BAT Machine receiver and locks via two massive lugs at the front, spaced opposite from each other. The bolt handle can be considered as safety lug, and the Maximus' bolt operation was butter-smooth right from the box.

about 50 rounds from our test Maximus during zeroing and testing and felt recoil was surprisingly light. While the muzzle brake is very efficient, there is quite a bit of blast to the side and slightly to the rear. This shouldn't be considered a criticism, because all shoulder-fired .50 BMG rifles require a very efficient muzzle brake to prevent dislocating the shooter's shoulder.

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(continued from page 16) and steel, which comprises the barrel, receiver, bolt, fire control components and a few other elements. It isn't a rifle that will attract the eye of the shooter who demands finely checked wood and deeply blued and polished metal components, but the Halo Maximus is accurate and is reasonably priced in comparison to other .50 BMG caliber rifles. The stock is machined from 6061-T6 billet aircraft aluminum and hard anodized to military specifications. Steel parts are Parkerized, again to Mil-Spec. The receiver has an integral Mil-Std-1913 rail for optics. A second Mil-Std-1913 rail to accommodate accessories such as an AN/PVS-22



A second MIL-STD-1913 rail to accommodate accessories such as an AN/PVS-22 night vision optic is located forward of the receiver mount.



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night vision optic is forward of the receiver mount. The Lothar Walther barrel is fully free floated and has a 1-in-15-inch twist. The stock and pistol grip are AR type, although our test rifle came equipped with one of Vitor's excellent Modstocks. This stock has a hook on the toe of the butt that allows the shooter to pull the rifle really tight into his or her shoulder—a necessity when shooting a large caliber rifle, especially one chambered in .50 BMG.

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I was pleased to note that the Maximus was shipped in a Pelican Case. Pelican Cases are injection molded from a proprietary resin material that is virtually indestructible. They are also dustproof and watertight, critical when transporting firearms and ammunition. A Vortex valve automatically adjusts air pressure while blocking water or dust. If a completely airtight environment is necessary, a manual pressure relief valve is optional. What I like best, though, is Pelican Case latches, which open effortlessly and simply, but are virtually impossible to open accidentally. Of course, handles are comfortable and the hinges are flat so the case stands firmly upright. Since the case contained a heavy rifle, it was also equipped with inte-

gral wheels that like everything else about Pelican Cases are as nearly indestructible as such devices can be. Although our rifle was in a black case, Pelican cases are available in many colors, including OD green and coyote tan.

Range Time

Shooting the Maximus was a real pleasure. I tested the big rifle with a Leupold 3.5-12x scope with Horus Vision H-25 military reticle at 100 yards because in law enforcement scenarios, engagements at distances beyond that will occur rarely, if ever. The aggressive muzzle brake reduces the .50 BMG's felt recoil to approximately 12 gauge 3-inch magnum level. Like any rifle having such a device, however, it is not advisable to be alongside when the cartridge is touched off and the muzzle brake does its job by diverting gases to the side and rear. The blast is not particularly noticeable to the shooter, who is directly behind it, but when on the range, the Maximus shooter should be careful to choose a firing point with vacancies on either side. The Maximus' single-stage Jewell trigger was very good, although I'd prefer a trigger with a bit lighter pull weight – say 3.5 pounds. The factory trigger had absolutely no creep or backlash and broke at 4.5 pounds. The safety is on the bottom to avoid interfering with the action and so that the shooter can activate or deactivate the safety without moving his hand from the pistol grip.

The Maximus was extremely accurate "right from the box." The rifle delivered minute of angle accuracy from the very first shots fired. The Maximus was tested with Anthena AP2 armor piercing match (1.25-inch group with a called flyer. Two rounds were actually touching), Extreme Shock (Mullins) Match (1.4-inch group), Summit Match (1.5-inch group) and GI Armor Piercing Incendiary (API), considered by most to be the most accurate GI ammo available (3-inch group). Bear in mind that each of these bullets is a half-inch in diameter, so group size center to center is relative. I didn't chronograph our test ammo because .50 BMG muzzle blast would almost certainly have damaged or destroyed the chronograph.

A brief comment about ammunition. GI ball in either M8 or M33 is notoriously inaccurate. Don't use it, not even for practice, because it has different ballistics from whatever match grade duty ammo the agency authorizes. Like anything else, when it comes to ammunition, use only the best available. Remember that your rifle is only as good as the ammunition you put through it. You can note from the test results that all of our match grade ammo delivered good results. The Anth-



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ena AP2 armor piercing is expensive and is available only from the importer, Drake Associates, but it is the only match grade armor piercing round available. That said, any .50 BMG match round is going to deliver terminal ballistics that completely overshadow those from any other shoulder fired rifle. When the tactical situation calls for a .50 BMG, just about any match round is acceptable because armor steel will almost never be encountered in a law enforcement environment.

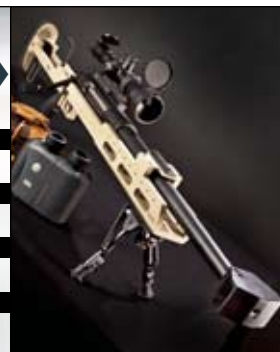
Final Notes

The Halo Maximus offers the competitive or law enforcement shooter an accurate and reliable .50 BMG rifle at a price that is competitive with rifles of similar capabilities from other manufacturers. The Maximus isn't pretty in the traditional sense, but it is rugged, well made, well finished and accurate. **SW**

SPECIFICATIONS

HALO ARMS MAXIMUS >>>>

CALIBER:	.50 BMG (12.7x99mm)
BARREL:	22 inches
OA LENGTH:	46.5 inches (retracted), 48 inches (extended)
WEIGHT:	25 pounds (empty)
STOCK:	Dual struts, adjustable
SIGHTS:	None
ACTION:	Single-shot bolt a
FINISH:	Matte black, custom color available
PRICE:	\$5,185



FOR MORE INFORMATION

HALO ARMS
484-614-4860, haloarms.com

LEUPOLD & STEVENS
800-538-7653, leupold.com