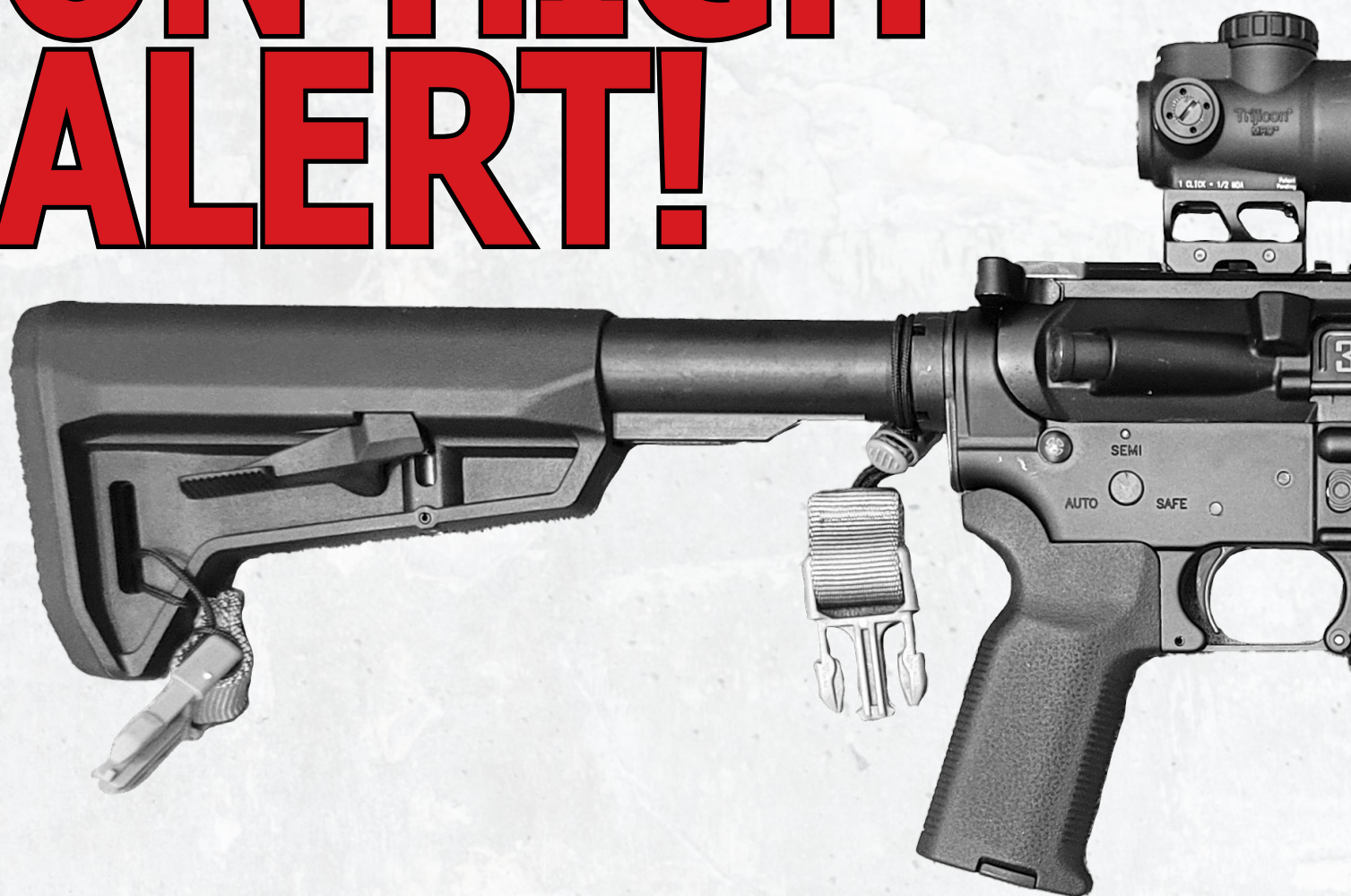


ON HIGH ALERT!



AN EVER-GROWING ARRAY OF HIGH-END REAL STEEL WEAPONS SYSTEMS ARE BEING FAITHFULLY REPRODUCED IN AIRSOFT INCARNATION ALONG WITH ALL THE LEGITIMATE LICENSING AND TRADEMARKS INTACT, AND TO AN INCREASINGLY REALISTIC DEGREE USING THE SAME MATERIALS, PROCESSES AND FINISHES AS THEIR LEAD FLINGING COUNTERPARTS! STEWBACCA MANAGED TO GET HIS HANDS ON THE LATEST AND GREATEST FROM ONE OF TAIWAN'S HIGH-END CUSTOM COMPONENT AND TURNKEY SOLUTION MANUFACTURERS, RED ALERT TECH (RATECH) OF HUALIEN ON THE EAST COAST OF TAIWAN, TO PUT IT THROUGH ITS PACES!

Those of you who saw my coverage of MOA 2022 back in February's Issue 146 along with the various online media and videos covering the event, and indeed those of you who make use of customised GBBR platforms in various corners of the world will no doubt have come across the name "RATEch" (Red Alert Tech) based out here in Taiwan, who for quite some time now have been churning

out near indestructible upgrade components for an array of GBBR platforms, building on their earlier experiences of making gas nozzle components for imported Tokyo Marui guns to allow them to operate in Taiwan's physically (and FPS-wise) hotter environments effectively. Myself and Military Anny went to visit them prior to me receiving the sample of their latest licensed product, and the full story of

our visit and the company and its history will follow in a subsequent issue; however for now I'd like to introduce you to their turnkey GBBR solution, the EMG licensed Noveske N4 GBBR 10.5" 300 BLK carbine with GHK magazine-fed compatible internals of their own producing.

As per my MOA 2022 coverage, RAtech were the first stall at the entrance to the show, and Anny happened to be working with them for the full weekend, helping extol the virtues of their high-end products in her usual skilled-at-arms manner, so



naturally I spent some time chatting with them and handling their various offerings to get an idea of what upcoming products they had in the works. In particular the licensed Noveske products got a lot of attention (and indeed a picture of "Lil Mike" of Team Taiji handling one of them for my photographic exploits emblazons one of the pages of my review coverage) but many others' interest was also piqued by the faithful replication of the much sought-after real steel equivalents.

Being made available in various configurations (to suit both 10.5" and 14.5" variants), and with 5.56mm and 300BLK variants being offered with the suitably accurate variations of gas block positioning, faux gas system length and barrel profiles being similarly faithfully replicated in great detail, as well as being produced with both GHK and Tokyo Marui

MWS compatible platforms, RAtech have certainly been busy behind closed doors putting together a real treat for fans of top tier ARs the likes of which are seen in the hands of household names in the real steel firearms industry as well as units that operate in extreme environments or circumstances.

It isn't just the overall looks and minor details of the real spec Noveske N4 that are replicated, the physical construction methodology also gets the RAtech attention to detail treatment, with the upper and lower receivers being realistically produced from CNC finish

machined forged aluminium blanks, as well as the free float MLOK compatible handguards being produced from CNC machined extrusions and heavy profile external barrels turned and surface finished in a manner as identical to their real steel counterparts as can be managed with access to Taiwan's whole island array of manufacturing methods and sub-contractors available within relatively easy logistical distances given the relatively small size of our island home.

HANDS ON

When you first lay hands on an RAtech Noveske N4 GBBR, or any of their full gun products for that matter, you can immediately feel the difference between them and some of their more mainstream but economically and mass produced competitors; the fit and finish are superb and really sing to the horrendous engineering nerd in me. One of the things I was immediately appreciative of when handling and operating them at MOA 2022 was the smoothness of their mechanisms; the bolt carrier groups feeling like they are running on glass beads or roller bearings, there is a slight metallic grating noise of the carrier moving, but there is no real resistance like you might experience in other products, particularly in the middle of their range of movement. Many other GBBR

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“I DECIDED TO SEE WHAT THE RATECH WAS CAPABLE OF WHILE I WAS AT IT, PUTTING A MIX OF 0.45G AND 0.48G BLS BBS THROUGH IT WHILE I HAD IT WITH ME FOR ITS FIRST OUTING, AND IN ALL HONESTY IT WAS PERFORMING AS WELL AS, IF NOT BETTER, THAN MY PSG-1 AND FAL WOULD AT THOSE RANGES”

platforms, especially those with AR configuration internals, tend to 'hang up' midway at times or give more resistance to manual operation or during the firing cycle as their hammers will start resisting the movement of the bolt carrier groups as they get overridden.

This fairly typical phenomenon is noticeably absent from RATEch's N4 GBBRs and other products, as is the 'sprongy' operation of the buffer tube and its spring, which to me sings to the quality of the components, their realistic surface finishes interacting, as well as the fine tuning of the internal mechanism, as the hammer rests perfectly in the cocked position to not put too much upward pressure on the bolt carrier that results in that resistance.

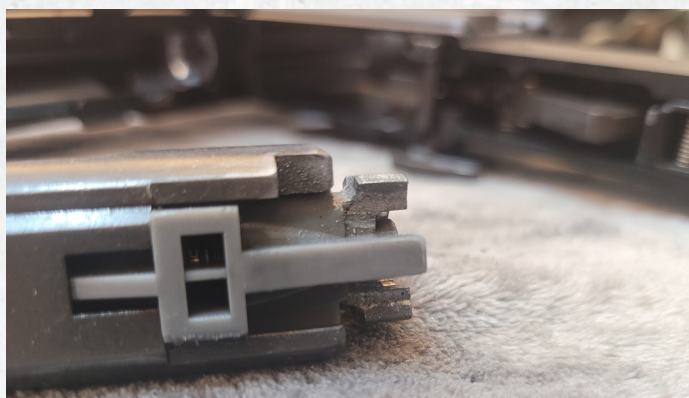
The next thing you are likely to notice (and literally everyone who's handled my example has commented on) is the trigger; it's just beautiful, worthy of a Garand Thumb ghosting segment! With a very short and realistic overall slight forward travel upon cocking the action, coupled with around a 4lb short and crisp pull and break and similarly excellent reset that occurs right at the front of its resting state with no slack or take up, in a similar manner to the H&K style triggers of the PSG-1, MP5 and HK53 I have, but on a much shorter travel. It makes it ridiculously easy to let off multiple BBs in a rapid string, which, coupled with the general build quality and consistency has allowed me to stack rounds on paper at IPSC practise sessions to the point where it's drilling one large contiguous hole in the perforated 'A' letter of the A-zone.

Being GHK compatible you can definitely feel the difference in its operation as well; there's just something about GHK's AR PMAG system that seems to deliver "Good Hard Kick" The action cycles with great impulse and speed, and of course the very enjoyable recoil and noise to accompany it, the whole system working together just pounds BBs downrange and the buttstock into your shoulder in a very reassuring and repeatable manner, with little or no cool down even when dumping all the BBs through it in semi auto strings.

After first receiving the RATEch Noveske N4 GBBR I took it out to our Yangmei Dormitories outdoor CQB site along with my PSG-1 which I was going to do some paper printing work at 10, 20 and 30m to test some new ammunition and get some measurable



“THE N4 GBBR OBVIOUSLY HAS THE BENEFIT OF RATECH’S UPPER INTERNAL GAS COMPONENTS (WHICH THEY’VE LARGELY BUILT THEIR NAME AND BRAND UPON) WITH THEIR MORE RECENT INJECTION MOULDED POLYMER INCARNATIONS OF THEIR MAGNETIC LOCKING NPAS GAS NOZZLE AND BOLT CARRIER SYSTEM”



results prior to trying some internal upgrades. On the day I was throwing BLS 0.48g BBs, the heaviest I have found which aren't the black colour like the 0.5g BBs which are therefore nigh on impossible to see downrange, and was happily lobbing rounds out to 50m with little or no effort, even knocking over a leftover coffee cup at that range.

I decided to see what the RATEch was capable of while I was at it, putting a mix of 0.45g and 0.48g BLS BBs through it while I had it with me for its first outing, and in all honesty it was performing as well as, if not better, than my PSG-1 and FAL would at those ranges, peppering the cupboard that the coffee cup was resting on with a surprisingly narrow cone of fire at such a reasonably long range given that it's basically an SBR sized rifle with a much shorter inner barrel than the PSG-1's monstrous 650mm one and 7.62mm scale internal gas system.

Again a line of teammates was forming to get hands on, especially some of my fellow GBBR appreciators who recognised the platform and the GHK magazine I was feeding into it; many knowing and appreciative noises and grins all round as we threw BBs downrange in the light rain from the cover of the prep area inside one of the buildings.

I'd already taken the liberty of using the M-LOK and picatinny top rail of the handguard and upper receiver to stick an ballistic protected Aimpoint T1 style red dot sight on the top, as well as the replica LA5 unit I got from TMC for the Archwick GHK L119A2 dress-up bit I'd done way back for its release a year or so earlier but had since been languishing in a bag not seeing any use. This platform is perfect for such cool-kid-toys and it really completed the look, as well as finally giving me a mounted illumination solution for the darker parts of the corridors and buildings, and I was soon reliably throwing BBs all the way down the length of the corridors with a consistency and accuracy that surprised myself almost as much as my teammates on the receiving end! It was a good day...

I've also added the leftover two point sling from the aforementioned "Obi Wan Nairobi" attempt, and also added on some QD Fastex buckles and a proper QD attachment M-LOK point to the rear left slot of the handguard as well as a stub BCM style vertical foregrip angled forwards on the rearmost bottom M-LOK slot as that allows me to comfortably clamp

"I'VE CHRONOGRAPHED THE N4 GBBR PUTTING OUT AROUND 1.5J MUZZLE VELOCITY, WITH 0.20G BLS BBS GIVING A VERY CONSISTENT 122-125M/S RANGE OF SHOTS WITH VERY LITTLE VARIANCE FOR THE MOST PART"

grip the whole lot as well as actuate the on-board or remote switches for the LA5 to give me torch or green laser capability. The latter mode is not permitted for use in game within our own rules in Taiwan, but nonetheless it's useful for co-witnessing the point of aim with your red dot during zeroing or against paper or popper targets on the range. However, it's also of limited use at times after the first BB flies downrange as the sheer recoil impulse tends to shake the LA5 and its axially mounted battery with such force that it interrupts the metal contacts inside and cuts out the light or laser if you have it stuck on continuous on mode!

Of course I won't let this minor inconvenience detract from my great enjoyment of the system - thankfully my optics these days mostly have transverse batteries to avoid them blinking out during the inevitable recoil of the vast majority of my gun collection out here. The RATEch N4 GBBR is just obscene amounts of fun to use as well as being genuinely applicable in a snap-shooting style thanks to the sheer consistency of its inner workings and the results they bring you on both paper and meat; I'm also planning on fielding it at the next 'Ding Ding Cup' action air competition coming in early August, as it will no doubt serve me as well in a competitive environment as it has on the skirmish field and running action air drills thus far. I've also acquired a further three GHK PMAGs for it to give me a total of 160 BBs so I can also take it to the upcoming POLK 3 Milsim as an alternative to my primary FAL setup

which can carry nearly as much ammunition but in fewer magazines thanks to the 40 BB capacity of the GHK PMAGs over the 25ish balls of fun of the eight FAL mags I have.

Fielding it against living targets at the recent game at our new airport side brushland outdoor site, I was once again pleasantly surprised to see it throwing heavyweight BBs out towards the 70-80m mark with ease, almost letting me pick off individual leaves on trees... if my eyes or optics were good enough for that! And again, it was rivalling the FAL for range and consistency which I'd taken along for further testing and fielding on that same occasion.

IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS...

In terms of output, the N4 GBBR obviously has the benefit of RATEch's upper internal gas components (which they've largely built their name and brand upon) with their more recent injection moulded polymer incarnations of their magnetic locking NPAS gas nozzle and bolt carrier system, a more economical and accessible variation on their older full CNC steel setups which found their way into my WETech HK416 and/or T91 to resolve a lot of the issues I was having with them, but which cost around the same as the base guns! These newer polymer alternatives give you all the same adjustable and position-retaining NPAS benefits but in a much more affordable guise.

Without adjusting it myself thus far I've chronographed the N4 GBBR putting out around 1.5J muzzle velocity, with 0.20g BLS BBs giving a very consistent 122-125m/s range of shots with very little variance for the most part; joule creep does tend to come in to play a little even though the barrel is comparatively short (the NPAS system enables the N4 to kick it up to 2J of muzzle energy when running the 0.48g BLS BBs) so, your mileage may vary depending on local temperature conditions as well as restrictions, but the obvious ease of adjustment and reliable retention of settings for RATEch's magnetic locking NPAS allow you to be sure that you can get your own N4 singing at the right note for your situation and keep it there.



The magazine well has a slight flaring around it to allow for better funnelling of magazines into it during reloading, and the 'marine' style ping-pong double paddle makes it very easy to reliably release or manually lock open the bolt with its twin control surfaces that are heavily chequered to ensure positive thumb positioning and actuation, even with sweaty hands, although the magazine release is fairly standard right side index finger only and the other controls. Bolt release, charging handle and fire selector are non-ambidextrous as well, but I haven't found this to be a huge hamper to my use thus far but will see how I fare in more intensive urban environment use where I'll be transitioning shoulders

more in the longer term.

The very upright grip angle of the MOE pistol grip coupled with texturing of its outer surfaces makes it very easy and comfortable to control and handle, while the side-flapper-locked MOE stock is easy to adjust and comfortable to cheek weld on. It also affords an integral sling-mounting loop, although there are no QD sockets as standard, nor is there any mounting furniture on the rear of the castle nut plate/lower receiver buffer tube extension, so I have just wrapped a stringed QD fastex around the castle nut for now in case I want to not make use of the two point sling at any point and clip in to my integral one point sling setup of my plate carriers.



So, with all that said would I recommend the RA-Tech Noveske N4 GBBR to you? It certainly doesn't come cheap, with unit prices in the 30,000 Taiwan Dollar mark it's in the same territory as Archwick or Viper Tech products of a similar ilk, but, you are getting something very special out of the box at that! Having fielded and owned innumerate GBB rifles and SMGs at this point in my adventures out here in Taiwan, if I had to do it again or narrow down my collection to a few nice things just for me (as Bill did when he went to live in the USA and I did back in the UK in the years before I left) I would be highly inclined to pick up one of these and sell off a few other lesser platforms to offset it.

Just having something that performs to this level, with the consistency and user experience, as well as the fit, finish and operation really speaks volumes to the "you get what you pay for" aspect of airsoft equipment. If you love Noveske products, and want a licensed replica that will put BBs out in a tight cone of fire and look the mutt's nuts, I certainly wouldn't dissuade you from picking up one of these. It's likely going to become my go-to ARs given the track record of the others I have and all their malfunctioning woes... **AA**

