



SWS **EXTREME** RANGE SURESHOT

**McMILLAN TAC-50
BREAKS THE LONG RANGE
RECORD BARRIER:
2,430 METERS!**

Quietly communicating, the two-man Canadian sniper team agreed to take down the biggest threat first, a Taliban insurgent carrying an RPK machine gun. Behind a McMillan TAC-50, Cpl. Rob Furlong stared intently through the scope and observed three armed men carrying weapons to an al-Qaeda mortar nest in the mountains of Afghanistan. Using a Leica Vector laser rangefinder, Master Cpl. Tim McMeekin spotted the primary target at 2,430 meters. Furlong increased the elevation he calculated by turning a knob atop his scope. Furlong whispered, "Stand by..."

The flight time of the .50-caliber bullet can be estimated at 4.5 seconds after factoring the air resistance. Over that time, the bullet drops nearly 100 meters before impact. Furlough's first shot missed. A second shot struck the pack carried by the target. "They had no fear," Furlong recalled. "They didn't run. I guess they've just been engaged so many times."

Determined to make the shot, Furlong quickly manipulated the spiral-fluted bolt and

reloaded the chamber. He considered what went wrong with his second attempt. Instead of drawing the trigger straight and to the rear, he had favored one side and pulled the shot.

"Stand by," Furlong repeated. The third shot cracked and flew through the Shahikot Valley before they observed the third round violently striking the target's torso.

Record-Breaking Shot

March 2002: The objective of Operation Anaconda was to kill or capture al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters hiding in the towering snow-capped mountains of Afghanistan's Shahikot Valley. American SF and a small number of Afghan fighters were to do the majority of combat in the largest ground offensive in the War on Terror. Canadian snipers were asked to come along... just in case.

Story & Photos By Eric R. Poole



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Cpl. Furlong's shot broke the longest recorded kill by a sniper in combat previously held by the legendary Gunnery Sgt. Carlos Hathcock. The Marine set the long-standing record of 2,250 meters in February 1967 using a scoped .50-caliber M2 in Vietnam. Like Hathcock, Furlong seemed destined for sniping at an early age. After spreading rotten fish on a piece of wood, 10-year-old Furlong would try to shoot flies out of the air with pellet guns. Born right-handed, Furlong taught himself to fire left handed as well as right. In fact, he graduated his sniper course in 2001 after performing all of his target practice left handed. The longest combat kill now goes on record as 2,430 meters or 12.08 furlongs (in reference to the sniper's surname), an old English term meaning "furrow length" that was used to describe the distance a team of oxen could plow without resting (1/8th mile).

For 19 days, the Canadian snipers impressed their American counterparts by disposing of the enemy with relentless precision. Protected by U.S. troops, the snipers and their TAC-50 were shuttled from hill to hill as needed, destroying enemy lookouts, protecting U.S. troops moving through the valleys and destroying menacing sources of enemy fire. Furlong prefers anonymity over



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recognition. "It doesn't matter who did it," said Furlong. "That guy was taken out and he didn't have an opportunity to kill anybody else, and that was it."

"These guys, regardless of what country they were from, what flag they fought under, they were just excellent military professionals," says Capt. Justin Overbaugh, commander of a U.S. scout platoon working with the Canadian snipers.

"Thank God the Canadians were there," was the statement from one American

soldier. The U.S. awarded Cpl. Furlong a Bronze Star for his actions that helped to ensure the success of the mission. Just a few days later, Furlong's sniper unit became the subject of a military police criminal investigation for inappropriate conduct (allegedly showing disrespect to an enemy deceased). No charges would ever be filed, but the experience caused Cpl. Furlong and two other snipers to leave the Canadian military. After his resignation, Furlong became a police officer.



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SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .50 BMG • **ACTION:** McMillan dual-lug bolt, magazine fed

BARREL: 29", 6 groove, 1-in-15" twist, Navy contour, fluted, match grade, threaded w/ muzzle brake, free floated

WEIGHT: 26 lbs. • **OVERALL LENGTH:** 57" • **MAGAZINE:** (1) 5 round, detachable box

TRIGGER: 3 to 4.5 lbs., Remington-style, single-stage, adjustable

STOCK: Adjustable saddle-type cheekpiece, LOP spacer system, 4 flush-mount cups w/ sling loops

FINISH: NP3 bolt, Dura-Coat Metal Finish (to match stock) Available in black, olive, gray, tan and dark earth



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Longrange Ordnance Disposal

The TAC-50 became the Canadian LRSW (Long Range Sniper Weapon) in 2000, just two years before Cpl. Furlong used one to make the longest kill. Ironically, it wasn't procured to serve as a sniper's primary weapon. Rather, the TAC-50 was sought by Canadian EOD (explosive ordnance disposal) personnel to penetrate the casings of unexploded ordnance. Afghanistan's unique terrain expanded the rifle's capable nature to bridge a distance gap exploited by Taliban insurgents. Snipers were now able to engage the enemy from ranges they had never trained for.

The TAC-50s used by the Canadian Forces were eventually designated as the C15. Even though the McMillan rifle was proven effective against enemy personnel, the Canadian LRSW places the greater emphasis on its role as an anti-materiel rifle, a role that has already been proven by Canadian and American forces alike. The U.S. Navy's EODMU-11 (Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit 11) has distinguished the TAC-50 in service against IEDs and unexploded ordnance in Iraq. The burden of anti-personnel engagements generally falls on the shoulders of more portable centerfire weapon systems but the recorded exploits of truly longrange shooting in the thin, high-altitude air of Afghanistan illustrate the caliber's multi-mission versatility.

"Big Mac Attack"

Affectionately nicknamed the "Big Mac," McMillan's TAC-50 is a sleek bolt-action rifle chambered in .50 BMG. Produced in Phoenix, Arizona, this long-range anti-materiel weapon is based on successful McMillan designs appearing in the late 1980s. Making several versions of a .50-caliber rifle, McMillan bases these products on the same proprietary action. The unique spiral fluting and long handle on the rotary bolt speeds loading operations and is manually cycled with dual lugs that lock the bolt into the receiver. The heavy match grade Lilia barrel is fluted to quickly dissipate heat and reduce the overall weight. It's fitted with an effective muzzle brake that reduces recoil.

Feeding the TAC-50 is a five-round, detachable box magazine. The fiberglass stock is one of McMillan's own, featuring a screw-on collar that is used to attach and secure the removable stock. This McMillan rifle features a spacer system that allows the operator to customize the length of pull and a saddle cheekpiece that's adjustable for comb height so the operator can obtain proper eye relief.

LE's Secret Weapon

Since 9/11, LE agencies have been given funds in the name of Homeland Security to strength a municipality's ability to respond to a domestic terror attack. The reported effectiveness of the .50-caliber round in combat has caused many agencies to consider the need for a rifle capable of hard-target interdiction.

To learn about a recent procurement of the McMillan TAC-50 with American law enforcement, *TW* recently contacted one agency and was told, "We're not ready to discuss the use of the TAC-50. Our S.W.A.T. team has attended specialized training and we consider it our secret weapon. We don't want the bad guys to know we have this unique capability."

Depending on the load, S.W.A.T. teams can benefit from the TAC-50's penetrating power and surgical precision. McMillan only selects match barrels that are hand-lapped and held to competition bench-rest standards. The use of a .50 is often one of the most effective and safest ways to immobilize a vehicular target at range, even in urban environments. A shot to the engine will easily tear through a vehicle's sheet metal. Unlike popular belief, a .50 caliber bullet will not typically penetrate through an engine. Once inside the engine bay, however, a .50-caliber bullet can kill the engine in a number of ways. An impact on the belt system, shot through the battery, or even a crack in the engine block that spills fluids will help shut things down.

An LE agency equipped with a TAC-50 can overcome many types of reinforcements or barricades seen in standoff situations and can terminate the rampage of an active shooter protected by body armor. A number of EOD units maintain a .50-caliber rifle to check suspicious objects and detonate unexploded ordnance, negating the need for an EOD specialist to make first contact. Compared to other means of solving these problems, the TAC-50 is a safer solution that can reduce an LE agency's collateral risks.

Shooting Impressions

TW obtained a TAC-50 and evaluated its potential alongside another brand's semi-automatic and another's single-shot bolt action. Already known for the ability to win bench-rest competitions, the central reason for the comparison was to determine the effectiveness of the muzzle brake and consider other tactical applications when fitted with Trijicon's new 6x48 ACOG. Limited to 100 yards and observing a medic's recommendation that no shooter fire more than 20 shots, *TW* recruited an uninterested party for the test. Shooting one brand of rifle after

Trijicon TA648TRD-50 6x48 ACOG



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Trijicon TA648TRD-50 6x48 ACOG
TW fitted the TAC-50 with the new Trijicon 6x48 ACOG designed for use with the .50 BMG cartridge. It satisfies the need for a magnified self-luminous tactical sight. This ACOG would readily serve LE applications as well as military missions by enhancing target identification and increasing hit probability on extended-range shots. Trijicon's fiber optic and tritium-based technology powers the red chevron aiming point, even in low-light conditions. A BDC (bullet drop

compensator) is incorporated with aiming points for the estimated trajectory of the .50 BMG round to 1,800 meters. For more information, visit www.trijicon.com.

Specifications

- Magnification:** 6x
- Objective lens:** 48mm
- BDC reticle calibration:** .50 BMG
- Length:** 9"
- Weight:** 36.9 oz.
- Illumination:** fiber optic, tritium
- Reticle pattern:** Chevron (red)
- Eye relief:** 2.7"
- Field of View:** 3.3 degrees
- Adjustment at 100 YDS:** 4 clicks/in.
- Mount:** TA75
- Housing material:** forged aluminum

the other, the McMillan seemed to return a noticeable amount of concussion back towards the shooter but it easily won the contest with the least amount of felt recoil.

Utilizing the new ACOG from Trijicon and Hornady 750-gr. A-MAX loads, many

3-shot groups fired from 100 yards completely destroyed a 1-inch circle (and then some). Falling back to 600 yards, we utilized the ACOG's BDC (bullet drop compensator) reticle and held the "6" mark at the center of a steel silhouette swinger. Shot after shot was answered with a metallic "ding." The use of an ACOG with the TAC-50 is a specifically good combination for LE agencies or helo-interception operations that don't require an overpowered optic to make an extreme shot, but could use an easy-to-read BDC reticle that balances magnification with a useable field of view.

Post-Testfire Report

Cpl. Furlong's record feat is not typical for the effective range of the .50 BMG and the first round hit probability at ranges beyond 2,000 meters is even more unlikely. The fact that a TAC-50 was used to make a record-setting shot speaks greatly for McMillan's rifle but credit falls on to those gifted with the talent of marksmanship.

"You can teach a certain amount of it," Furlong said. "But there is a large percentage that you must have naturally. A good shooter is born. You can't teach someone to be a good shot if they don't naturally have it."