

STRAIGHT PULL 700

Strasser's Game-Changing Bolt Gun

By Iain Harrison

Photos by Kenda Lenseigne



We might as well get this out of the way. The original Strasser RS14 straight pull is our favorite hunting rifle due to its versatility, accuracy, and overall build quality. But it's not without drawbacks, notably its cost and lack of aftermarket support.

The tiny Austrian company has attempted to address these shortcom-

ings by taking technology embodied in their flagship rifle and blending it with the most popular bolt gun in production, the Remington 700. To our knowledge, this is the first time anyone has managed to achieve this, and when we first heard of it, we were concerned that the end result might turn out to be like Frankenstein's monster, cobbled together out of scraps and showing obvious seams where the two Austrian and American icons were smashed into each other. It turns out, we were wrong. The resulting marriage is very high class — kinda like

that of those other two Austrian and American superstars, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Maria Schriver. Before he started banging the help.

NUTS AND BOLTS

The Remington 700 action was originally designed to be cheap and easy to manufacture, being machined out of a piece of round bar stock. By luck rather than good judgment, it turned out to be capable of very good accuracy, once it was tuned up and trued by a competent gunsmith and any warping caused by heat treatment taken care of. Four years after its introduction in 1962, the Marine Corps adopted it as the M40 sniper rifle, and every man and his dog started using R700 actions for precision builds,



leading to the explosion of aftermarket chassis, magazines, triggers, scope mounts, and barrels we see today. The Strasser RS 700 taps into this vast support network, as almost any accessory you can think of is compatible with their extremely slick, impressively fast, straight-pull action.

The company is introducing both a complete rifle to the U.S. market, as well as barreled actions for those who want to build something to their specifications. We're the first U.S. media outlet to get hands on with both.

THE RIFLE

Designed to meet the expectations of the American consumer, the RS700 rifle is equipped with a medium sporter profile barrel, which matches the original Remington magnum tube's contour — not Kate Moss skinny, so

there's some mass to resist stringing after a couple of shots. Barrels are sourced from Lothar Walther, Europe's premier maker, and machined to Strasser's spec so we were curious to find out how they'd group with American calibers. The muzzle is threaded to accept a suppressor or brake, which dictates how thin this area can be made and still form an acceptable shoulder. Unfortunately, the thread pattern is metric, which limits the number of cans that'll bolt up directly, but Strasser does offer thread adapters to convert it to 5/8x24, and Dead Air's Xenon mount has an M14 option.

The manufacturer strongly recommends against taking apart the bolt, so naturally we did just that. And what we found was a work of art.

A key feature the RS14 incorporates into its design is rare in the straight-

pull world, and it's carried over into the new rifle. Primary extraction is one of those things you don't really need until you do, and then you *really* need it. In most bolt guns, breaking the fired case free of the chamber walls is achieved by a cam path at the rear of the receiver, which acts on the root of the bolt handle to give the bolt a very short but powerful nudge rearward. In the case of the RS700, this is done by an extension of the bolt handle acting on a plunger inside the bolt shroud, which shoves against the left side of the receiver. When the bolt's in battery, it's completely hidden until needed.

As well as providing primary extraction, when the bolt handle is drawn to the rear it retracts four identical-locking lugs in the bolt head. These

The RS700 rifle ships with a three-round, flush-fit magazine, but any AICS mag will work. According to Strasser USA, the magazine release on production rifles will lose the protruding wings.



Sometimes, there are minor differences in action geometry between various 700 clones which require hand-fitting. We had no issues dropping the barreled action into the MDT chassis.

The Timney HIT is one of our favorite 700 pattern triggers and like others will drop into the RS700 action. Note that pins are tight, so use grease.

The RS700 bolt is a masterpiece. Its four identical locking lugs are made of hardened tool steel and offer greater surface area than a Mauser 98. Note channel for massive bolt stop.



engage a recess in the receiver wall to provide a strong, self-centering lockup. According to CEO, Matthias Strasser, the action strength is probably overkill for most cartridges. "We had the proof house in Vienna test the RS700 action with only one locking lug present, and it withstood the pressure generated by three 308 proof loads." Needless to say, anyone who manages to reassemble their rifle in this configuration probably shouldn't reproduce, but it's reassuring, nonetheless. In order to idiot proof the action and prevent the end user from assembling the rifle without any locking lugs at all, there's a spring-loaded lever in the receiver wall that prevents the bolt entering in this condition.

The four locking lugs are pressed outward by a long sleeve over the firing pin. In the event of an overpressure situation leading to a pierced primer, there's a chance of gases flowing into the bolt through the firing pin hole and pushing back on the locking sleeve, with an even smaller chance of this moving sufficiently to retract the lugs. To prevent this remote eventuality, an independent locking block in the bolt shroud swings into place when the bolt's in battery, completely blocking the locking sleeve. In the event of a massive amount of gas entering the action, say from a case head separa-

tion, most of it will take the path of least resistance and blow out of the two identical ejection ports, channeled by the bolt contours. The remainder will exit through the magwell, with anything making it past these areas being stopped by the bolt shroud. Having had an impromptu face tat courtesy of blowing up a case in a Ruger action, we're kinda big on catastrophic handling of propellant gases.

Because 99.99 percent of Remington 700 actions aren't straight pull, and as a consequence need a place to accommodate the vertical component of their bolt throw, this begs the question of what to do with the bolt handle slot in all the stocks and chassis systems out there. In a stroke of genius, the company's engineers used this location for the bolt stop, which is both massive and easy to access. "We recognize that straight-pull actions invite the user to slam them back and forth," Strasser said. "So, we designed the bolt stop to hold up to hard use."

Challenge accepted. We naturally tried to break it by running the bolt as fast and as violently as we could, but during testing it held up just fine. In case you were wondering, the RS700 rifle's stock is hand-laid carbon fiber, with a fairly vertical pistol grip, hand-painted camo finish and for those



Note bolt stop lurking in bolt handle slot.

who regularly use bipods, an attached Picatinny rail on the forend. Comb height is well-suited to scopes with a 40mm and above objective lens, and it accepts AICS pattern magazines, with MDT's three-round, polymer, flush-fit mag shipping with the rifle.

Scope mounting is taken care of with the included one-piece Pic rail, which is proprietary to this design due to different spacing between the front and rear mounting holes. Remington 700 two-piece scope mounts fit with-

out issue, as do lightweight, direct-mount rings such as Talley's offerings.

BARRELED ACTION

Available in .308 Win, 6.5 Creedmoor, and 6.5PRC, the RS700 barreled action allows users to configure the rifle the way they want it, within certain parameters. Those of us who just can't leave well enough alone and want the freedom to twist up their own barrels are going to be disappointed that stripped actions aren't currently available, but we're assured that option will become a reality in the not-too-distant future. As things stand, barrels are headspaced using a Remage barrel nut, meaning you can mess with swapping in different calibers and barrel configurations at home, so long as you have a barrel



Thumb rest allows adequate clearance for rapid bolt manipulation. Cocking indicator protrudes from the rear of the bolt shroud.

and action vise, along with the correct headspace gauges. We're told that shouldered pre-fit barrels will also headspace correctly, but due to the Strasser's fat bolt design, both systems require the corresponding barrel recess to be opened up by 80 thousandths of an inch. While this is currently a 10-minute job for anyone

with a lathe, there should soon be aftermarket barrel makers offering these as off-the-shelf items. In the meantime, we're looking forward to seeing the first one done with a Dremel — you know it's going to happen.

An additional benefit to anyone wanting a one-gun solution can be found in the bolt head. Like the RS14, the RSS700 can accommodate multiple cartridge families by simply swapping out bolt heads, enabling the user to go from a 0.378-inch case head, all the way up to magnum case head diameter. You could train with 0.223, then screw

in a 6.5 PRC barrel and go hammer out to a mile with the same gun.

The RS700 action can be configured according to the needs of left- and right-handed shooters, by simply unscrewing the bolt stop and swapping sides. Left-handed bolts are available from the manufacturer, so this throws up the intriguing possibility of a right-handed shooter keeping their master hand on the pistol grip and operating the trigger while they run the bolt with their left. While we haven't actually done this, we have to believe that with a heavy gun on a bipod chambered in



a low recoiling cartridge, it's got to be very fast. Maybe it's time to try and break the record for the "Mad Minute."

In keeping with the design intent of the heavy-barreled test unit we were sent, we dropped it into an MDT ACC Elite chassis. This necessitated tweaking the magazine catch, as the RS700 bolt requires the mag to

ACC Elite chassis allows the installation of a bridge for clip-on NV devices.

sit about 1mm lower. Not a problem in this case, since it just needed a couple of turns on the adjustment screws; in other less sophisticated systems, you may need to do some grinding. Leupold's excellent-but-discontinued Mk8 x-25x50 was added to the 20 MOA one-piece base. We also swapped out the included Timney trigger for their HIT model, after removing the superfluous Remington bolt stop. While the supplied unit is an excellent trigger in its own right, we wanted to be able to adjust it down below 2 pounds, which the HIT allows.

ROUNDS DOWNRANGE

Right off the bat, the RS700 showed a hint of what it was capable of. Without any barrel break-in voodoo, it started stacking bullets on top of each other. After zeroing at 100 yards, my spotter for the evening, a former USMC Scout Sniper strapped a Magnetospeed to the barrel, and we took some velocity readings using Norma 143-grain Golden Target loads. With

the chrono in place, the RS700 turned in 0.3-inch groups and surprisingly exceeded the usually optimistic data printed on the ammo box — 2,735 fps average velocity.

Banging steel was hilariously easy, all the way out to the furthest target available, some 1,080 yards distant, and due to the speed of the straight-pull action, it was possible to get a second round in the air before the first had impacted the target.

We're looking forward to seeing what this combo can do in a competitive setting. Certainly, it can group as well as any factory rifle out there, and the straight-pull action should offer advantages when it comes to multiple target engagements. We're also intrigued by the potential of building a single rifle to meet every need, using multiple calibers and swapping in barrels and bolt heads as required, relying on the vast quantity of R700 aftermarket parts to tailor the gun to the job at hand. Which gives us an idea for another article — watch this space. ■

STRASSER USA RS700



CALIBER: 6.5 Creedmoor, .308 Win, 6.5 PRC

CAPACITY: 3 to 10 rounds

BARREL LENGTH: 22 to 26 inches

OVERALL LENGTH: 46 inches

WEIGHT: 14.1 pounds (as configured)

MSRP: N/A at press time

URL: strasser-usa.com

AS CONFIGURED:

Leupold Mk8 3.5-25x56:	N/A
MDT ACC Elite Chassis:	\$1,600
Atlas Bipod:	\$280
Timney HIT trigger:	\$245