

Collecting and Shooting the Military Surplus Rifle



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What a SERVE!!! By R. Ted Jeo

By R. Ted Jeo

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WARNING!!!

Check local laws and regulations before using this type of device on a firearm. On that note, your range may not even let you use one.

And, of course, these are NOT to be used during a tennis game. no matter how badly you want to win.

In other words, do not fire at people, places or things that you do not want to kill, maim, or damage.

Okay, now here is something to do with all those weapons that have the 22mm NATO standard grenade launching adapters mounted on them. You know, the AR's, the 59/66 SKS's, FAL's, CETME's, the FR's etc. Everyone KNOWS what the dang things are used for, but, alas, most of us have NO reason to use it. Until now that is.

We were contacted a while back by Bill Larkin who said he had something that would be fun to play around with on those aforementioned weapons. That something turned out to be a tennis ball launcher. In the past, there have been other articles that were done on golf ball launchers and even on REAL (dud) grenade launching items, but I figured it would be MY turn to have some fun.





Some of the common types of NATO 22mm standard launchers include (top) FR 7/8, 59/66 SKS, and the AR's (A2 in this case)

What I got from Bill was a nice mil surp waterproof case that contained the launcher. He also sent a supply of 7.62 NATO and 5.56 NATO parade blanks. He does sell blanks in both of these calibers as well as 7.62x39 and 7.62x54R. Also, he recommends that only parade blanks be used with tennis balls, as grenade blanks would very well blow right through your tennis balls. And, obviously, you would NEVER use standard ball ammo.



Bill's launcher kit comes with the launcher, a length adapter

and a handy dandy carrying case which he is offering while supplies last. A colorful and helpful instruction sheet is included as well.



7.62mm on left, 5.56mm on right.
Blanks can be denoted by the crimped ends in the case.



Although constructed of “household” materials, I found the launcher to be quite sturdy and designed to give lots of service. The interior of the shaft is an aluminum pipe that is fitted perfectly to the 22mm adapters. Total weight (w/o ball) about 11 oz.

The entire device slides over the barrel of the firearm. There is a bungee attached (as Bill calls it a “Forward Kinetic Motion Inhibitor”) that locks the device onto the weapon so the whole thing does not go flying.

I did not try to launch anything other than a tennis ball and I would not recommend anything else be tried.

Launching from an FR rifle

The first thing I noticed when I slide the launcher onto my FR8 rifle, was that it fit nearly perfect. That is, the length of the launcher tube was almost perfect so that the grenade adapter on the rifle was just below where the bottom of the ball would be. Not only that, but the forward sling mounting point is a perfect place to attach the retaining bungee cord to.



The front end of the FR 7/8 rifle. Perfect fit for the launcher.



The bungee attached perfectly to the forward sling point.



A view right down the launcher. You can see where the grenade adapter sits at the bottom of the launcher cup. A near perfect fit.



The launcher attached to the front end of the FR7. My only complaint would be that the bungee on my sample is red. Black would be, if available, a better option.

When I took the rifle out to my local range, I got some pretty good laughs. It seems that years ago, there were some locals who wanted to do a very similar thing and built golf ball launchers "for the fun of it". For the local "old timers" it brought back fond memories of good friends and good times.

We loaded up some of the blanks into the FR8 and gave it a try. Recoil was near non-existent, as was the report. You could hold the rifle to your shoulder as if you were shooting as normal, but we found that the ball would not go nearly as far nor fly as straight. Best results, of about 50-70 yards, were obtained holding the rifle at a 45 degree angle.

From Wikipedia:

Rifle Grenade

A rifle grenade is a form of a grenade that utilizes a rifle for launching. First developed in WW1, there are still uses for it even today. *[oddly, US rifles now use dedicated add on grenade launcher (such as the M203) but M16 series rifles still have the standard 22mm NATO adapter attached]*. Benefits of the rifle grenade was that it was typically larger than hand tossed designs as well as distances that the grenade could be launched to.

Two designs of rifle launching systems are used, one being a stick that fitted down into the barrel of the rifle and the other is an adapter placed at the end of the rifle muzzle. In both methods, a blank cartridge is required to produce the propellant gases. If a standard live round were used, consequences would be disastrous to say the least. This led to the development of grenades that either trapped the live round or allowed the bullet to pass through it by means of a hole.

Being that these devices are very low velocity projectiles, distance is obtained by increasing the launchers angle, often at angles greater than 45 degrees, which allow them to drop into trenches or hit targets behind cover. Maximum distances were out to 200 yards.

[I should note that the Germans did develop a pistol fired grenade launcher as well during WW2]

[italics] denote added comments by author

[See the video shooting a tennis ball from an FR 8 rifle.](#)





The number of times a tennis ball can be re fired is dependent on how they stand up to the abuse. These two were fired repeatedly from the FR8 with little more than some singed areas of felt.

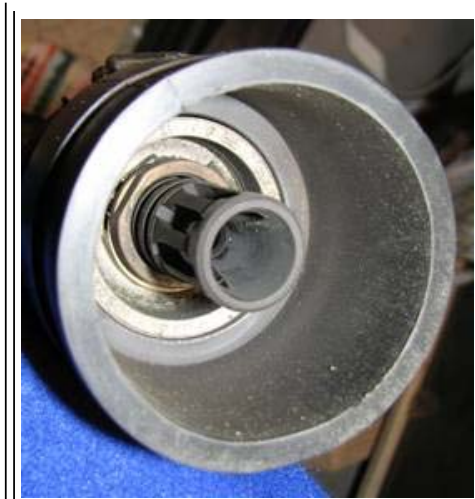


Making sure that the ball is smashed all the way down into the launcher will give the best results.

Beware that the blanks have a coarse "grit" that is loaded into them. On some of the shots, I could feel a pebbling of this grit on my hands. As always make sure that eye protection is used, and, of course, clean your weapon after use.

Launching from an M-4 Clone type AR rifle:

When I slipped the launcher onto the "clone-4" rifle, it was immediately evident that it would not work. The barrel protruded approximately an inch into the adapter. An extension would be needed to make the launcher fit. I contacted Bill and he said that he would be adding an extension sleeve with each launcher to take care of this problem, in the mean time; I hit the hardware store with an AR15 birdcage in my hand and found something that would work for the sort term. Essentially, I found that a PVC 1" ID union, which was about 1" long, would do the job. The second thing I needed was something to extend the range of the bungee. I settled on a short piece of lightweight chain, which I looped through the front sling holder.



When the adapter was slid onto a standard carbine length Clone-4 barrel, the barrel protruded into the adapter.



What I did was to slide a 1" long PVC union down the barrel first. Then I added a short piece of chain to extend the range of the bungee attachment.



The launcher now includes a short tubing section add on that can be used to extend the length of the adapter tube (top).



If I were to make this more permanently appealing, I would have cut the chain shorter and painted the union black. For testing purposes, it worked just fine.

[See the video of shooting a tennis ball from a Clone 4 rifle.](#)

Using the 5.56mm blanks that Bill provided, I got the tennis balls to launch about 50-60 yards (at a 45 degree angle). The action did not cycle, nor would I expect it to. The tennis balls did not fire as far as the 7.62mm blanks pushed them, no doubt because of the lower powered rounds being used. Again, recoil and report was negligible. The tennis balls being fired from the Clone 4 did not fare nearly as well. The entire felt area was completely ripped off where the ball was resting against the front of the barrel and the ball was even cut open by each shot. When I found the balls down range, I was able to squeeze them and gasses from firing were still evident inside the ball.



Tennis balls fired from the Clone 4 would not last nearly as long. Each of the bald areas is just one firing from the rifle.



When first found, if I squeezed the ball, it would open up and gasses would escape from inside.

So, now, what would you say is this launcher good for? Well, we got a good laugh out of it at the range, but a lot of the guys thought that it might be a good exerciser for a gun dog. Not owning a gun dog nor having access to one, I could not test out that theory. I would not recommend you show up at the local tennis court with one though. It's just plain fun.

How to get one:

Complete information about the launcher can be found at

www.Laxin.net/Launcher

The launcher package can be purchased directly from Bill for \$20 plus \$7 shipping & handling.

In the launcher package you receive the 22mm grenade tube with the attached Rubber Spherical Projectile Stabilizer Container (the rubber cup) and the Specialized Forward Kinetic Motion Inhibitor (commonly called a bungee cord). Included is a 3" adaptor for longer barrels, four starter tennis balls, an instruction sheet, and (while supplies last) a Free military quality-carrying bag.

Blank launching cartridges are available in 7.62x39mm for \$7.00 per 20 rounds or 7.62x51mm NATO, .223, or 7.62x54R for \$5.00 per 20 rounds. Launcher orders with ammo also add \$2 for shipping and handling no matter what the quantity of ammo ordered.

Telephone or email orders are welcome. Credit cards accepted.

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Bill guarantees that "...launching tennis balls will put a smile on your face."

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