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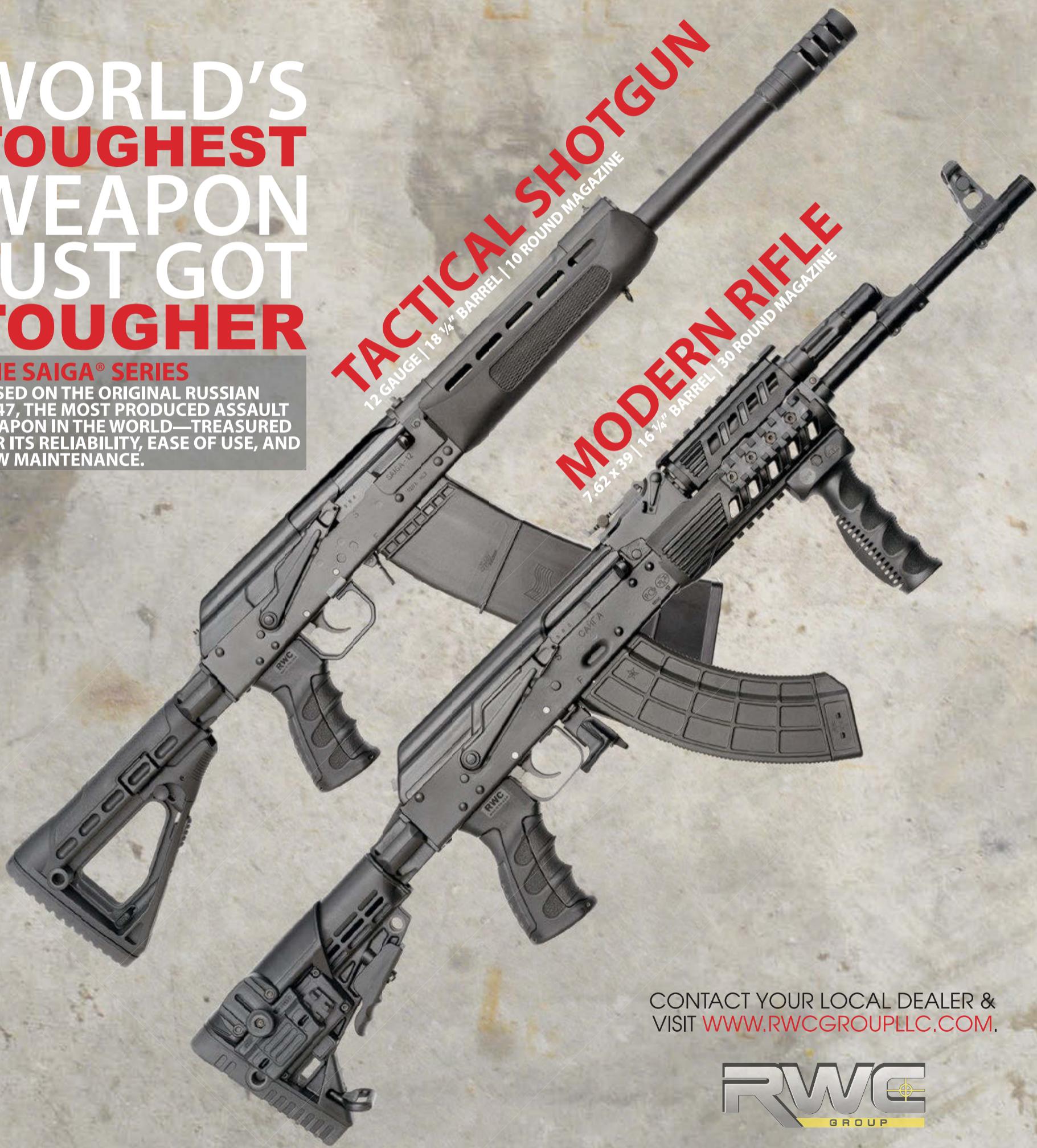
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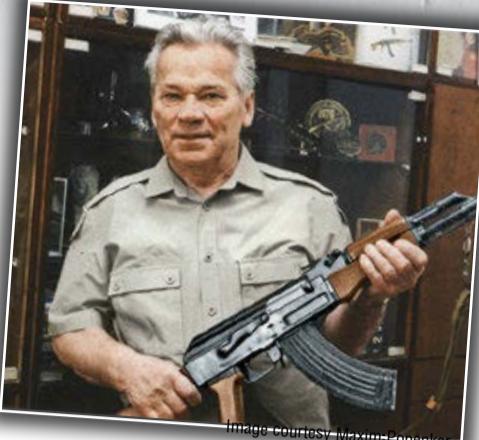


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FROM THE EDITOR

AK-47

+ SOVIET WEAPONS
2015Image Courtesy Maxim Popovskiy

So here we find ourselves, at the third annual edition of *AK-47 & Soviet Weapons* magazine. There have been two very significant losses to the AK community since our last issue was published. First and foremost, we lost Mikhail Timofeyevich Kalashnikov—the founder and creator of the revered AK family of weapons. Passing away on December 23rd, 2013, at the age of 94, Kalashnikov left behind a legacy that will continue well beyond his years here on earth. He will be sorely missed.

The other significant loss to the AK community is politically based—namely our access here in the United States to high-quality, Russian-made firearms. In 2014, President Barack Obama signed Executive Order 13661 “Blocking Property of Additional Persons Contributing to the Situation in Ukraine.” The purported purpose of this action was to help discourage Russia from continuing an active role in the current conflict in the Ukraine. The result was a direct ban on the importation of these Russian-made firearms. Despite the wishes of most U.S. shooters and collectors, this order took direct action against the group known as “Concern Kalashnikov” (formerly Izhmash) and prohibited the further importation of its firearms here in the United States.

In discussing this situation with RWC Group, the exclusive importer of Concern Kalashnikov firearms here in the United States, this magazine received the following statement: “As of July 16, 2014, no further imports of the beloved Saiga rifles, shotguns and other fine sporting firearms from Izhmash were to be allowed into the United States.” However, a follow-up conversation with a contact at RWC revealed that the company “In early 2015 will begin U.S. production of AK type firearms, staying true to their Russian heritage.” I suggest we keep a close eye on this company and what it might have to offer.

While we must face this unfortunate reality, AK enthusiasts can take solace in the fact that the AK market here in this country is still very strong and vibrant despite this setback. Through the production of domestically manufactured (and, in some cases, sourced) firearms, the U.S. consumer still has many options from which to choose. And it is important to remember that while *AK-47 & Soviet Weapons* magazine is based on Russia’s revered creations that were developed and nurtured during the tenure of the USSR and beyond, it also happily considers the many siblings and distant cousins of the AK family from around the world. From Soviet-directed designs born in Eastern Europe to those inspired and influenced by Kalashnikov’s crowning achievement, this magazine considers them all. It is also not limited to only rifles, but also covers handguns, shotguns and the other more idiosyncratic creations that exist in the same spheres as Kalashnikov’s classic creation.

Bear in mind this fact as well: This magazine is not simply some dusty, old history book dedicated to the nuances of each and every step of the AK’s life (although that fascinating topic is thoroughly considered within its pages), but is also intended as a guide for today’s AK enthusiast. From reviews of tactical training classes that help you wring out the most performance from your AK to round-ups of the newest and greatest accessories to top custom builders and manufacturers churning out amazing products, this magazine is just as much for shooters as it is collectors.

If you take a look at the cover of this issue, you will see two incredible examples of what is available on the market today. On the left you have the Arsenal SLR-104FR, a 5.45x39mm side-folding-stocked rifle that is inspired by the cutting-edge Russian AK-74M. To its right is a classic-style Romanian md. 65 underfolder that is the result of a custom parts kit build with In Range, Inc. and Apex Gun Parts. These are just two examples of what you will find within the pages of this issue. But don’t take my word for it. Take a look for yourself and see what you find in this, our newest issue of *AK-47 & Soviet Weapons* magazine. We truly enjoyed compiling all this information and hope that you enjoy reading it as much as we did putting it together. Thank you again.

—Michael O. Humphries

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8

AK-47

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2015



28

4 FROM THE EDITOR

The AK-47 & Soviet Weapons 2015.

8 ON THE COVER

8 ARSENAL SLR-104FR *by Michael O. Humphries*

Compact 5.45x39mm sidefolder inspired by the classic AK-74M!

14 ON THE COVER

14 ROMANIAN MD. 65 7.62MM *by Michael O. Humphries*

Custom build of a classic underfolder with Apex Gun Parts and In Range!

24 COVERT FIREPOWER

24 COVERT FIREPOWER *by Maxim Popenker*

Suppressed 9x39mm tactical rifles of Russia's elite Spetsnaz forces.

28 AMERICAN TACTICAL GSG AK-47

28 AMERICAN TACTICAL GSG AK-47 *by Todd Burgreen*

Worthy rendition of its infamous big brother in a cost-effective .22 rimfire package!

32 CZECHPOINT VZ. 58 TACTICAL 556

32 CZECHPOINT VZ. 58 TACTICAL 556 *by Paul Scarlata*

Czech-born 5.56mm warrior blends classic lines with modern upgrades!

38 CUSTOM YUGO M92

38 CUSTOM YUGO M92 *by David Bahde*

Short-barreled 7.62x39mm build delivers classic AK lines and outstanding reliability.

46 BIRTH OF THE AK

46 BIRTH OF THE AK *by Maxim Popenker*

The Kalashnikov rifle's path from concept to worldwide military icon.

50 POLISH AKM 7.62x39MM

50 POLISH AKM 7.62x39MM *by Michael O. Humphries*

Atlantic Firearms' classically styled Kalashnikov!

56 ARAK AK-74 5.45MM

56 ARAK AK-74 5.45MM *by David Bahde*

This Bulgarian-sourced rifle offers time-tested design and amazing performance!

AK BUYER'S GUIDE ★★★★☆

20 Stocks, Grips & Foregrips

42 Optics, Sights & Lasers

68 Rails, Mounts & Handguards

90 Magazines & Drums

112 Miscellaneous Accessories

130 Reference Books



50

46



62 M+M INDUSTRIES M10-762 *by Jorge Amselle*

A rugged, Romanian-based AK that delivers 7.62x39mm performance!

72 SECOND-GENERATION AK *by Frank Iannamico*

The evolution and history of the Kalashnikov milled receiver.

76 MASTER YOUR AK *by David Bahde*

SureFire Institute brings modern-day training to the timeless Kalashnikov design.

80 INTERARMS HUNGARIAN AKM *by Denis Prisbrey*

Cold War-era 7.62x39mm brings the classic AK-63 design to our shores!

86 THE CHINESE TYPE 81 *by Maxim Popenker*

China's 7.62x39mm answer to the Soviet AKM series of weapon systems!

94 SOVIET SPEC-OPS PISTOLS *by Maxim Popenker*

Suppressed covert pistols built to give the Red Army the edge in the Cold War!

98 10 HYBRID WARRIORS *by Robert A. Sadowski*

Weapon systems that combine the best of the East and West into one package!

102 KREBS 7.62 SPEEDLOAD 2 *by Dr. Martin D. Topper*

Revolutionary Russian-based AK optimized for lightning-fast reloads!

108 HELMETS OF THE DDR *by Peter Suciu*

Warsaw Pact relics designed for the evolving East German military after WWII.

116 TOKAREV SVT-40 *by W. Darrin Weaver*

Soviet 7.62x54R built to bring heavy-duty firepower to the battlefields of World War II!

120 CATAMOUNT FURY II *by David Bahde*

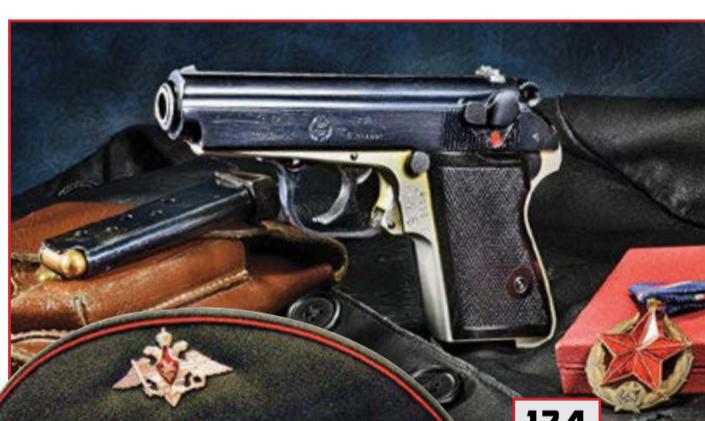
AK-pattern shotgun from Century Arms delivers potent 12-gauge firepower on target!

124 RK-59 PISTOL *by Leroy Thompson*

The Hungarian secret police's pocket-sized 9x18mm!

128 THE AK ARCHITECT *by Maxim Popenker*

Considering the life and works of Mikhail Kalashnikov.



ARSENAL

BY MICHAEL O. HUMPHRIES



While the 7.62x39mm AK may be the most recognizable of the Kalashnikov series of rifles, its often-overlooked younger brother—the 5.45x39mm AK-74—is an outstanding warrior in its own right.

And thanks to the efforts of Arsenal, Inc. here in the United States, we now have a Bulgarian-American variant in its SLR-104FR that gives U.S. shooters a chance to own their own version of the venerable Russian AK-74M version of the design.

For those unfamiliar with the history of the AK-74 series of rifles, its birth coincides with that of another modern military warrior—the U.S. M16. When the M16 appeared in the 1960s, it sent shockwaves through the world's military small arms community. Preceding the birth

of this design, most small arms were made of wood and

steel, and were designed to lob a reasonably heavy projectile at a reasonably fast speed.

However, with the appearance of the M16 designed to fire the 5.56x45mm cartridge, a new era of firearms design was born. Now firearms could employ ultra-modern materials and

manufacturing techniques (namely plastics and aluminum), and would also fire cartridges that approached downrange lethality from a totally different perspective. The low-impulse 5.56mm cartridge offered a light-recoiling round propelled at an extremely high velocity, offering greater ammunition load capacity due to its lighter weight as well as enhanced control during fully automatic fire.

At the same time the M16 made its debut on the battlefields of Vietnam, the Soviets were already in the midst of their own efforts to modernize the AK-pattern rifle. The AK had been enhanced and updated in the late 1950s in the *Avtomat Kalashnikova Modernizirovannyi* (AKM), which perfected a stamped steel receiver for the design and introduced a laminated stock set. The result was a lighter, stronger and lower-cost version of the AK.

The 5.45x39mm Arsenal SLR-104FR provides U.S. consumers with a civilian-legal rifle that closely approximates a Russian AK-74M.



Despite the advantages provided by the AKM, the Soviet defense industry still saw a need for a next generation of weapon—and the appearance of the M16 accelerated its efforts. After examining captured examples of the M16 and its new cartridge, the Soviets determined that

S.R.-104-FR

Compact 5.45x39mm sidefolder inspired by the classic AK-74M!

developing a new, equally revolutionary small arm to directly compete with the M16 was unfeasible. However, they did decide that updating the proven AKM was a viable alternative. So, a program to develop the next generation of the AK was set into motion.

It's All Relative

A close examination of the AKM in this new light determined that a modernized chambering would be the most logical next step. While the 7.62x39mm M43 cartridge had been an undeniable success, it was showing its age since its birth in the 1940s. However, the Soviets needed to develop a new cartridge that would easily work in an AKM-style design without requiring too much redesigning.

The result was the 5.45x39mm cartridge, which shared a similar overall length to that of the 7.62x39mm and followed the same "intermediate" cartridge design concept of its older sibling. As a result, it would be much easier to adapt the 5.45mm to the AKM platform. The new cartridge propelled a 50- to 60-grain projectile at around 3,100 feet per second, placing it in the same neighborhood of performance as the West's 5.56x45mm.

This left Soviet engineers facing the development of a new rifle for the new cartridge. Not looking to unnecessarily redesign the wheel (and frankly incapable at that time of matching the West's mastery of modern materials and manufacturing), the new AK-74 was a logical and relatively conservative adaptation of the AKM. The earliest models from the mid-1970s retained the laminated



Unidentified soldier armed with what appears to be an AK-74M, guarding a Ukrainian naval base in Crimea.



The receiver features a hook at its forward left portion designed to engage the stock assembly when folded. Note the optic rail.



The rear sight is a standard AK-style sliding tangent assembly that is ranged out to 1,000 meters for the 5.45mm cartridge.



The post front sight, elevation and windage adjustable, is protected by dual steel wings that are designed to protect it from impact.

“ THE NEW AK-74M ... TOOK EVERYTHING THE SOVIET'S HAD LEARNED ABOUT PRODUCING THE AK-74 AND COMBINED IT INTO A SINGLE NEW PLATFORM. ”

SPECIFICATIONS ARSENAL, INC. SLR-104FR

CALIBER: 5.45x39mm

BARREL: 16.25 inches

OA LENGTH: 27.5-37 inches

WEIGHT: 6.4 pounds

STOCK: Synthetic, side-folding

SIGHTS: Sliding tangent notch rear, winged post front

ACTION: Semi-auto

FINISH: Moly resin coating

CAPACITY: 30+1

MSRP: \$1,099

wood stock system and similar overall dimensions and weight of the AKM. What was changed externally was the addition of a new large, cylindrical muzzle brake, a horizontal groove along the buttstock and composite-bodied magazines. Also, the gas block of the AKM was eventually modified from its original 45-degree angle to that of a sharper 90-degree angle to reduce bullet shearing.

The AK-74 proved to be a solid update of the proven AKM, with it delivering exactly what the Soviet engineers intended—a small-caliber weapon that did not alter the positive characteristics of the parent design. Basically, it built on the strengths of the AKM while adding the new capabilities the Soviet military desired. The AK-74 went on to serve in Afghanistan, and siblings of the design began to pop up in the satellite states of Eastern Europe.

The Next, Next Generation

A notable next step in the evolution came during the tumultuous year of 1991, when the Soviet empire finally collapsed. From its introduction in the mid-1970s through to this era, the AK-74 had been developed into numerous variants and upgrades. AKS-74 rifles with skeletonized steel stocks were developed for more compact dimensions. Also, as the Soviet's mastery of modern materials improved, the AK-74 was updated with enhancements such as synthetic stock sets that offered lighter weights than earlier laminated stock sets.

The new AK-74M (with the "M" standing for "modernized") took everything the Soviet's had learned about producing the AK-74 and combined it into a single new platform. Externally, it would appear to many to be simply an AK-74 with a synthetic stock set (with the recognizable horizontal groove in the buttstock), but closer examination would reveal much more.

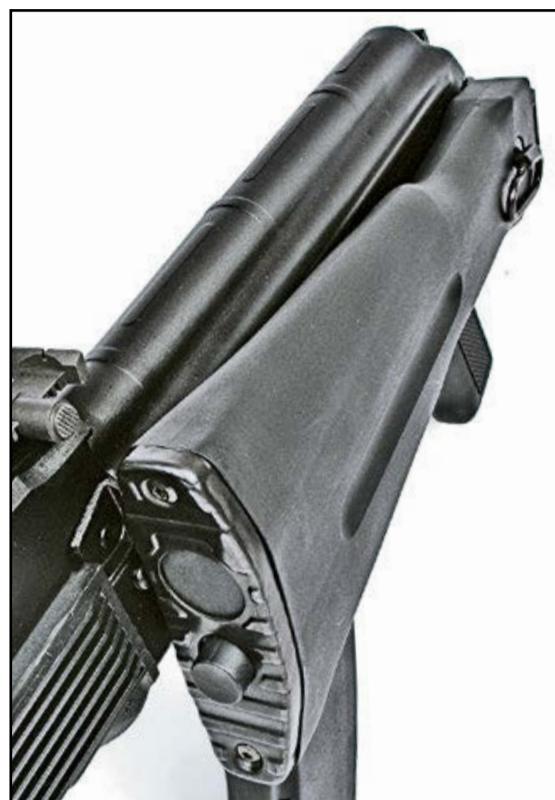
With the AK-74M, a full-profile synthetic buttstock was designed that would fold along the left side of the receiver. When extended, the stock looked like any standard full-profile buttstock. The result was a rifle that featured the good ergonomics of a full-profile buttstock, but with the compactness of a folding-stock gun when needed.

While the right side of the buttstock featured the familiar 74-style horizontal groove, the left side of stock had a large rectangular recess to allow room for the side-mounted optic rail. A release button for the stock was located at the rear left corner of the receiver. One simply pressed in the button and the stock would fold along the left side of the receiver and be captured by an exposed hook at the forward left end of the receiver. To release the stock, there was a push button in the ribbed buttplate (below the cleaning kit storage door) that would release the stock for opening.

Other changes established with the new AK-74M was a return to a non-ribbed top cover, which set it apart from the AKM-style top cover of earlier guns, and a redesigned, two-piece muzzle brake. The AK-74M was



The U.S.-made polymer pistol grip of the SLR-104FR is one of the 922(r) compliance parts in the design.



The buttstock is designed to fold along the left side of the receiver. It offers the comfort of a full stock and the compactness of a folder.



notable in that it eliminated the need of having both fixed and folding-stock models, and it served as the basis for what would become the AK-100 series in the post-Soviet era.

Appealing Alternative

Obviously, acquiring a semi-automatic version of the Russian AK-74M would be very difficult for a U.S. consumer due to importation regulations and restrictions. However, there is another option, and it is the result of a fortuitous relationship between the famed Arsenal in Bulgaria and Arsenal, Inc., its exclusive representative here in the United States. Arsenal, Inc. is a fully licensed affiliate of the Bulgarian manufacturer that manufactures (and remanufactures) AKs here in the U.S.

When it comes to Kalashnikov-pattern rifles, many consider Arsenal's guns to be the "Cadillacs" of the market. Basically, the Bulgarian guns are considered to be just about the closest you can get in both quality and design to original Russian guns. It is important to note that the company is not

simply an importer of Arsenal's products, but rather a fully functional manufacturing facility in its own right with independent production and R&D teams.

Full disclosure here—I am a bit of an AK-74 fanatic. As a result, I had been hounding Arsenal, Inc. for the past few years for a Bulgarian-based, AK-74M-style rifle. Needless to say, I was pretty ecstatic when I saw the press release for the SLR-104FR. In a recent conversation with Arsenal, Inc.'s Harry Pakhanyan, he explained to me that the 104 was developed to complete the SLR line.

"We wanted to add a member to the SLR line in the 5.45x39mm round. We had picked up on a strong demand for a factory-original, high-quality rifle in this cartridge here in the United States," he explained.

The SLR designation stands for "self-loading rifle," and "104" is the family designation for the 5.45x39mm series of rifles. The "FR" indicates that it features a folding stock as well as a side-mounted optic rail. "The



The buttplate features a button located below the cleaning kit storage door that releases the stock from its locked and folded position.



The U.S.-made handguard features stainless steel heat shields.



A 90-degree gas block assembly is designed to help reduce the risk of bullet shearing.

" WHEN IT COMES TO KALASHNIKOV-PATTERN RIFLES, MANY CONSIDER ARSENAL'S GUNS TO BE THE 'CADILLACS' OF THE MARKET. "



Unlike a Russian AK-74M, the Bulgarian SLR-104FR features an AKM-style ribbed top cover.

SLR-104FR is our flagship model in the 5.45x39mm series," Harry explained.

While researching the article, I visited the Bulgarian Arsenal's website to see if there was a corresponding model to the SLR-104FR in its current line but could not find one. When I asked Pakhanyan about this, he explained that the SLR-104FR is designed exclusively for the U.S. market. "The 5.45x39mm stamped-receiver gun is not a standard production model in Bulgaria anymore. The factory may manufacture this chambering under special requirements, which is exactly what happened with the case of the SLR-104FR," he stated. "The SLR-104 series rifles were specifically designed and manufactured for the U.S. market, in close collaboration with Arsenal, Inc."

My next inquiry for Pakhanyan regarded how the rifle is manufactured, and what is

the breakdown of domestic versus Bulgarian parts. He explained to me that one of the things that sets Arsenal, Inc.'s guns apart from others on the U.S. market is that they are fully factory manufactured rifles. "The Bulgarian components include the cold-hammer-forged, chrome-lined barrel and the mil-spec stamped steel receiver, to name just a few," Pakhanyan explained.

He made a point that these rifles are not reverse-engineered here in the U.S., but built correctly from the start. The U.S.-made components of the rifle are a polymer stock set, the fire control group and the muzzle brake—all produced stateside under the same specs and quality control as comparable Bulgarian parts. Arsenal, Inc. even adds its own upgrades such as stainless steel heat shields in the handguards and two-stage fire control groups.

Range Report

I recently had an opportunity to try out one of the SLR-104FR rifles for myself. Having tested several Arsenal, Inc. firearms in the past, I expected a quality product and was not disappointed. The rifle came packed in a cardboard box with a 30-round polymer magazine, a sling, oiler and cleaning kit. Arsenal, Inc. was kind enough to include an SM-13 scope mount as well as several additional 30-round magazines for testing.

The fit and finish of the rifle was top notch, and all controls worked smoothly. I did note some tightness in the stock release button, but discovered that bending the



Big Stock photo

PERFORMANCE ARSENAL, INC. SLR-104FR 5.45x39MM

Load	Velocity	Accuracy
Hornady 60 V-Max	2,769	3.25

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second by chronograph and accuracy for best 5-shot group at 100 yards.



★★★★★



Author used an Arsenal SM-13 scope rail and a Vortex StrikeFire II with a VMX-3T magnifier.

stock outward a bit relieved the tension on it and made it easier to disengage to fold the stock. Close inspection of the rifle revealed the classic "Circle 10" logo on the trunnion and the magazines. Visually, the rifle is a dead ringer for a semi-automatic AK-74M, apart from a few relatively minor differences such as the rifle's AKM-style ribbed top cover and the fact the rifle features a one-piece muzzle brake more like the original Russian AK-74 design.

For testing, I fitted the SLR-104FR out with the SM-13 scope mount on the side-mounted optics rail and topped it off with a Vortex StrikeFire II reflex sight paired with a VMX-3T 3X magnifier unit on a flip-to-side mount. I inspected and lubed the rifle and headed out to the range with some Hornady 60-grain V-Max steel-cased ammunition. Set up on the bench, I shot the rifle for groups at 100 yards and got a tightest group of 3.25 inches, with it averaging around 4 inches for all groups. I then moved on to some drills with double- and triple-taps, running a couple hundred rounds through the rifle. During the entire test it ran without a hiccup.

As a fan of the AK-74 series of rifles, I was thrilled by the chance to try out a 5.45mm like this Arsenal SLR-104FR. I have long wanted a side-folding rifle that is a close representation of the Russian AK-74M, and thanks to Arsenal, Inc. I now have a chance to own one. If your tastes are similar to mine, you should take a look for yourself. For more information, visit arsenalinc.com or call 702-643-2220. ★

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Custom build of a classic underfolder with Apex Gun Parts and In Range!

BY MICHAEL O. HUMPHRIES

AS compared to the extremely common (and ubiquitous) AR-15, the AK is still something of a mystery here in the United States.

Sure, many AK owners understand the difference between an AK-47, an AKM and an AK-74, but how about the more rare and unique variants? For those looking for something a little different, one of the best options is to scour the market for a “parts kit” and locate a skilled builder to construct it into a U.S.-legal, semi-automatic rifle. For the uninitiated, parts kits are basically the remnants of demilled military guns that have had their barrels and receivers cut, with the remainder of the parts sold as a kit.

So, where would you look for one of these?

I personally have had a good deal of luck with Apex Gun Parts, after having discovered the company a few years back. In that time, I have picked up some really interesting





Steve Woods Photo

“ ROMANIA IS EASILY ONE OF THE MOST PROLIFIC AK MANUFACTURERS IN THE WORLD, AND I CONSIDER THIS UNDERFOLDER TO BE ONE OF THE COUNTRY’S MOST INTERESTING VARIANTS. ”

The Romanian md. 65 underfolder features a distinctive fore-grip. Its shape allows room both for mags to rock into place and for the stock's buttplate to fit over when it is folded.

East German, Hungarian, Polish and Romanian AK kits from the company, and I make sure to keep an eye out on the company's website for when some new treasure may pop up.

It was during one of these forays that I discovered a kit that I had wanted to pick up for quite a while—a Romanian 7.62x39mm PM md. 65-based “AIMS” kit. Romania is easily one of the most prolific AK manufacturers in the world, and I consider this underfolder to be one the country's most interesting variants.

Ultimate Resource

Apex, which stands for “Armory Parts Exchange,” was founded in 2004 by Jeff Selvig. I recently had an opportunity to interview Selvig about his company. Selvig, who worked both as an overseer of a bonded warehouse and as a salesman in the distributor section of a major East Coast firearms importer, saw the potential for a new approach to the business.

“I had the opportunity to travel the world and see behind the scenes of the market in surplus firearms during my time there,” Selvig explained to me. “I noticed that there were many firearm manufacturers, firearms importers and firearms dealers, but not really many specializing in just selling parts. The ones that were tended to be older, established companies

that were not making a rapid or successful transition to the digital marketplace.”

Recognizing that there was a growing demand for this type of service to the digital community, Selvig struck out and founded Apex Gun Parts in 2004 in the small town of Palmer Lake in Colorado.

“The first products the company sold were mainly comprised of old Mauser parts and bayonets sold through eBay, Gunbroker and website discussion forums,” he told me. “One of the first big deals on parts kits for the company was a batch of U.S. M2HB .50 caliber kits that were imported from the former Yugoslavia.”

In the years since its humble beginnings in 2004, Selvig as president has shepherded the company's development into the successful venture it is today. “We adopted a saying years ago that ‘We sell customer service in the form of gun parts,’” Selvig explained. And this customer-oriented approach has proven to be successful, with the company having expanded to the point that, in 2012, it moved to a warehouse located in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

I was particularly curious to ask Selvig how they locate such interesting products—in particular AK parts kits. “Basically, the surplus industry is dictated by overseas availability. As an example, for years there may be no Hungarian AK parts kits available and then somewhere, in some office inside the Hungarian Ministry of Defense, there is a decision to replace a certain model and quantity of Hungarian manufactured AKs. Suddenly, what was once rare is now available in abundance,” he explained.

★★★ ROMANIAN MD. 65 7.62MM



The Romanian md. 65 kit from Apex Gun Parts served as the basis for the custom build featured in this article. Note the torch cut receiver and barrel.

The author acquired a chrome-lined U.S.-made barrel from Atlantic Firearms for the build, topped off with a U.S.-made slant brake.

During the course of my discussion with Selvig, I asked him why so much of the focus of Apex's product line appears to be centered on AKs. "I started collecting in the mid-'90s, and the AK was my favorite gun. It was much maligned then and not seen by many as worthy of collecting. For me, the AK embodied the history of the Cold War and the struggle between democracy and communism. Besides, who doesn't love buying something with U.S. dollars that was produced with Russian rubles!"

War era, adopted a Kalashnikov-centric approach to small arms design. First employing Soviet-made, milled-receiver 7.62x39mm AK and AKS variants in the 1950s, the nation sought to develop its own domestically produced Kalashnikov variants based on the Soviet's new stamped-receiver AKM developed in the late 1950s. What resulted was the *Pistol Mitralieră* (or "PM") series of select-fire assault rifles.

The earliest in the line was the 7.62x39mm *Pistol Mitralieră* model 1963, or PM md. 63 for short, with an export model dubbed the AIM md. 63. In basic design and operation, the md. 63 was a relatively straightforward AKM clone. However, the line was adapted to employ a laminated wood foregrip that set the Romanian guns apart from many of their contemporaries.

Romania's Own

So now with some insight into the story behind Apex, I moved on to consider the history of the Romanian kit itself. Romania, as a "satellite state" falling under the umbrella of Soviet influence during the Cold

SPECIFICATIONS

ROMANIAN MD. 65

CALIBER: 7.62x39mm

BARREL: 16 inches

OA LENGTH: 26-35.25 inches

WEIGHT: 8.75 pounds

STOCK: Steel, underfolding

SIGHTS: Sliding tangent notch rear, winged post front

ACTION: Semi-auto

FINISH: Moly resin coating

CAPACITY: 30+1

MSRP: N/A



Apex Gun Parts' Jeff Selvig (seated, wearing a hat) is discussing an issue regarding some firearm parts with his warehouse supervisor, general manager and a sales representative.



The md. 63 series proved to be a very successful design, combining affordable production costs with reliable operation. Recognizing a need for a more compact variant, the Romanians set about developing their own AKMS underfolder version of the design. The result was the 7.62x39mm *Pistol Mitralieră* model 1965, or PM md. 65. As with the md. 63, the Romanians also developed an export version of the underfolder rifle dubbed the AIMS md. 65. Although some md. 65 variants feature more traditional AKM-pattern forends with palm swells, the Romanians also carried over the laminated wood vertical foregrip concept to the design as they had with the md. 63. However, due to the nature of the underfolding stock design, it required some "tweaking."

The issue with including a vertical foregrip on an underfolding AKMS-style rifle is twofold. Firstly, the underfolding stock is designed to fold flat against the base of the forend, so a foregrip cannot be swept forward as it will not allow the buttplate to fold over it. But the way magazines "rock" in and out of a Kalashnikov precludes the use of a foregrip that sweeps drastically rearward. The solution was a somewhat short and "stubby" foregrip with an ever so slight rearward cant, allowing the folding buttplate to clear it as well as providing enough room for a magazine to rock in and out (but just barely). The result is one of the more unique-looking AKMS variants around, in my opinion.

Gun Details

With the Romanian md. 65 kit on its way, I set about the process of having it turned into a working, civilian-legal, semi-automatic rifle. From past experience on projects like these, I knew that the build would require a

certain amount of U.S.-made parts for the rifle to be Section 922(r) compliant under current firearm regulations. With a stamped-receiver gun like this, it would take a minimum of six U.S.-made parts to achieve this.

A logical starting point would be a new receiver and barrel, as they were the two primary parts not included with the kit. For the receiver, I picked up a NoDak Spud NDS-1 receiver designed for AKM-pattern builds. For the barrel, I went to Atlantic Firearms and picked up one of the company's own chrome-lined units that features muzzle threading and a pre-cut gas port. That left me with four more parts that I needed to acquire. The next logical step was a new semi-auto fire control group, so I picked a TAPCO G2 Trigger Group (made up of a single-hook trigger, hammer and disconnector), which knocked out three more parts for me. For the final part, I picked up a U.S.-made slant brake for the muzzle.

For the project itself, I knew exactly whom I should contact—In Range, Inc.'s

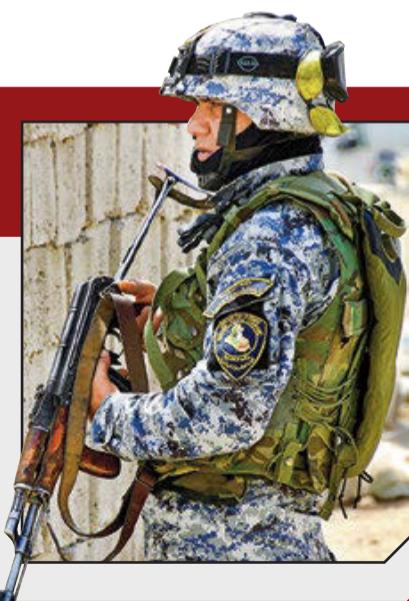
The md. 65 features a vertical foregrip shaped to allow the folding buttplate of the stock to fit over (above, far left). The stock assembly included with the kit featured milled steel arms (above left and right) that are more like those of earlier AKS-pattern rifles.

“ FOR THE UNINITIATED, PARTS KITS ARE BASICALLY THE REMNANTS OF DEMILLED MILITARY GUNS... SOLD AS A KIT. ”

PERFORMANCE ROMANIAN MD. 65 7.62x39MM

Load	Velocity	Accuracy
Ammo Importers Arsenal 122 FMJ	2,297	4.00
Century Red Army Standard 123 FMJ	2,258	4.85
Winchester 123 FMJ	2,249	5.15

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second by chronograph, and accuracy in inches for best of three, 5-shot groups.



DoD photo

The md. 65's sights are made up of a post front with heavy steel wings and a rear sliding tangent assembly ranged out to 1,000 meters.

Troy Sellars. When I first got into having parts kits custom built into working rifles, I asked around with several of my compatriots in the AK community regarding a skilled builder. Sellars name came up as a great source for quality work. Over the years, Sellars has built Romanian, East German, Polish and Bulgarian guns for me, and each of the builds have been stellar. So, I ensured that all the parts were sent to In Range, Inc. and waited for Sellars to work his magic.

A few weeks later, a complete and functioning semi-automatic md. 65 arrived at my gun shop. The rifle exhibited the workmanship I have come to expect from Sellars, with it sporting an attractive satin black moly coating over a Parkerized finish. The kit featured an older-style underfolding stock with milled steel arms as is often seen on these guns.

I took the rifle and three types of ammunition out to the range and ran it through its paces. While underfolders can be a challenge to shoot, the rifle did quite well with it averaging around 4.5 to 5 inches at 100 yards with all loads, and a tightest group of 4.00 inches with one. It is no varminter, but these results are well within what I would consider acceptable for the intended purpose of this design. There were no malfunctions during the testing.

Thanks to Apex Gun Parts, In Range, NoDak Spud, Atlantic Firearms and TAPCO, I have been able to add a very interesting AK variant to my collection that is not only an interesting reference rifle, but also a fun shooter. If you are looking to locate some of the more rare and interesting AK variants, I recommend you keep an eye out at Apex Gun Parts' website to see what they have dug up. To learn more about the Romanian md. 65 series, take a look at Frank Iannamico's *AK-47: The Grim Reaper*. ★

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Apex Gun Parts
apexgunparts.com; 719-481-2050

Atlantic Firearms
atlanticfirearms.com; 401-352-5183

NoDak Spud
nodakspud.com; 952-942-1909

TAPCO
tapco.com; 800-554-1445



The Man Behind The Build: **TROY SELLARS**

As you can tell by the quality of his work, Troy Sellars of In Range, Inc. is a true AK enthusiast. He was first inspired to get into building these guns in the late 1990s.

"I had picked up a magazine that had a 'Krinkov' on the cover, and I just knew I had to have one," he explained to me in a recent conversation. "The AK tends to be the most reliable 'tool' out there. They always work. Also, there were an oddity in the 1980s and 1990s, which really piqued my interest in them."

So, Sellars was faced with the question of how he would acquire the guns he wanted. "I could not afford to pay someone else to build something for me so I jumped in with both feet!" Sellars' background made him particularly well suited to this new undertaking. "I had machinist training in trade school, and I was at that time a police officer and had taken numerous armorer courses. I had also started buying a few machines to tinker with in my garage." He founded In Range, Inc. in 1997, and due to the volume of work he was getting decided in 2004 to leave his police job and commit full time to the company.

Further enhancing his skills and burnishing his credentials, Sellars was able to acquire training at an AK factory in Central Europe as well as doing some work on site at Czech Small Arms in the Czech Republic. This, combined with his years of experience in building these guns, made him the go-to builder for a wide range of customers. "I have assembled many AK variants for Cinema Weaponry in California, and you have probably seen some of them in television shows like *The Unit* and movies such as *Red*."

Despite the breadth of its work, you may be surprised to know that In Range, Inc. is basically a one-man operation. "I build each and every gun myself. If I am out of the shop, then guns are not being built," Sellars stated. "Am I going to get rich building these AKs? No. But I love doing it and it makes me happy," he told me. And, if his work on the md. 65 underfolder is any indication, I would say that his love of his job is apparent. For more information, visit www.inrange.com or call 865-932-6509. —By Michael O. Humphries



Troy Sellars is shown here in the In Range, Inc. shop working on the Romanian md. 65 custom rifle build.

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BOYDS LAMINATE WOOD STOCK



ROUND-UP

STOCKS, GRIPS & FOREGRIPS



BY ROBERT A. SADOWSKI

The latest polymer stocks and stock systems can up the 67-year-old AK-47's game. Polymer stocks are impact resistant, durable and impervious to weather and chemicals. Modernized stock systems mean an AK's stock can be configured to fit a wide variety of shooters' statures. Need something more traditional? After-market wood stocks offer a high level of quality while remaining old-school in appearance. Choices in grips range from Eastern European military surplus to high-tech modern options. The AK does not have to be a one-size-fits-all gun, but rather one ready for charging into the 21st century.

APEX POLISH AK GRIP



ERGO AK CLASSIC GRIP



ARCHANGEL AA123 FOUR-POSITION STOCK



CAA FLASHLIGHT GRIP ADAPTOR

ARCHANGEL AA123 FOUR-POSITION STOCK

ATI AK-47 STRIKEFORCE PACKAGE

BOYDS LAMINATE WOOD STOCK

CAA FLASHLIGHT GRIP ADAPTOR

ERGO AK CLASSIC GRIP

POLYMER STOCKS ARE IMPACT RESISTANT, DURABLE AND IMPERVIOUS TO WEATHER AND CHEMICALS."

APEX GUN PARTS POLISH AK GRIP

Apex's Polish AK grip is military surplus and is new old stock, never before installed on a rifle. It is the correct grip for Polish AKM-pattern rifles and comes in a dark red color. The sides are checkered for a good grip and the bottom is flared so an operator's hand stays in place during sustained fire. (apexgunparts.com; 719-481-2050)

ARCHANGEL AA123 FOUR-POSITION STOCK

This adjustable stock from Archangel Manufacturing offers four length of pull adjustments and a seven-position cheek riser, providing the user with a custom fit when using iron sight or optics. The AA123 stock is designed to fit most stamped receiver AK variants. A ventilated recoil pad offers added shooter comfort. (archangelmanufacturing.com; 800-438-2547)

ATI AK-47 STRIKEFORCE PACKAGE

The ATI AK-47 Strikeforce Package features the company's Scorpion Recoil System that helps to absorb felt recoil. The package includes the stock, pistol grip, handguard and forend grip. The six-position stock folds to make your AK more bug-out bag friendly and features an adjustable cheekrest. The Scorpion pistol grip is textured for a sure grip, while the handguards are equipped with Picatinny rails and the forend grip is adjustable. The package fits most stamped receivers. (atigunstocks.com; 800-925-2522)

BOYDS LAMINATE WOOD STOCK

The Boyds laminate AK-47 stock features a 12.75-inch length of pull and Boyd's 0.5-inch-thick recoil pad. The two-piece handguard and the pistol grip match the multi-layer wood in the buttstock, offering a unique look with toughness and warp resistance. The stock, furniture and grip are designed for stamped receivers. Minor fitting may be required. Available in forest camo, nutmeg or pepper. Custom options available. (boydsgunstocks.com; 605-996-5011)

CAA FLASHLIGHT GRIP ADAPTOR

The Flashlight Grip Adaptor (FGA) accommodates any 1-inch-diameter, push-button end cap tactical light and attaches to any Picatinny or Weaver-style rail. The grip provides user control of the weapon while the light helps in identifying a target in the darkness. The FGA's switch is thumb activated to eliminate the possibility of a sympathetic response by trigger finger activation. The unit weighs 8.8 ounces. (commandarms.com; 215-949-9944)

ERGO AK CLASSIC GRIP

The Ergo AK Classic Grip is made of rigid polymer and uses an ambidextrous design with smooth finger grooves, making the grip more ergonomic for better weapon control. A textured surface covers all sides. Included in the kit are 6mm bolts that allow it to be easily installed on most AK rifles. The AK Classic Grip will also fit PAP AK weapons. (ergogrips.net; 877-281-3783)



"POLYMER STOCKS ARE IMPACT RESISTANT, DURABLE AND IMPERVIOUS TO WEATHER AND CHEMICALS."

STOCKS, GRIPS & FOREGRIPS



FAB DEFENSE UAS-AKMSP FOLDER

The UAS-AKMSP Folder from Fab Defense provides a side-folding stock system upgrade for underfolder-pattern AKMS rifles. It features an adjustable cheekpiece for height, making it useful for using optics or iron sights. The folding stock is a super-strong, slim-line design and features a ventilated recoil pad and built-in sling swivel. It's available in black, olive-drab green or desert tan. (themakogroup.com)

MAGPUL MOE AK+ GRIP

Delivering AK shooters an enhanced grip option for their rifle is Magpul's MOE AK+ Grip. It features drop-in installation for most milled and stamped AK-47 and AK-74 rifles. The grip combines a reinforced polymer body with a wrap-around rubber overmolding for enhanced grip and comfort. The unit also accepts Magpul's Grip Core for customized gear storage inside. (magpul.com; 303-828-3460)

MISSION FIRST TACTICAL ENGAGE EPGI47

The Engage EPGI47 from Mission First Tactical has the same grip angle as the AR-15/M4 rifle's grip. Three front straps—two with finger swells—and three backstraps allow users to customize the grip to fit most hand sizes. A secure, watertight storage compartment with a foam block stifles any rattle. Replaces most AK mil-spec grips. (missionfirsttactical.com; 267-704-0001)

STARK EQUIPMENT AK GRIP

The AK-47 grip from Stark Equipment offers patented ergonomic features that include the hand-stop, unique grip angle and internal storage compartment. The design can help an operator with weapon control and reduce shooter fatigue. The grip is made of a durable, textured material that resists chemicals and extreme weather. Available colors are black, earth, green and multi-cam. (starkequipment.com; 603-556-7772)

TAPCO AK T6 STOCK

TAPCO's Intrafuse AK T6 stock looks similar to the M4 mil-spec stock and features an adjustable length of pull with six locking positions, from 10.5 inches (fully collapsed) to 14.5 inches (fully extended). The T6 is made of heavy-duty polymer and comes in a matte black finish. The stock is compatible with most AK variants. (tapco.com; 800-554-1445)

US PALM AK BATTLE GRIP

US PALM Westernized the AK grip by engineering its AK Battle Grip, which provides the user with a comfortable grip that drives the user's hand up to ensure a positive hold on the weapon. The grip is compatible with AK-47, AK-74, AKM, RPK and other AK variants. Made from a proprietary polymer, the Battle Grip is ambidextrous and textured for better retention. Finish choices include black and Flat Dark Earth. (uspalm.com; 602-281-2940)

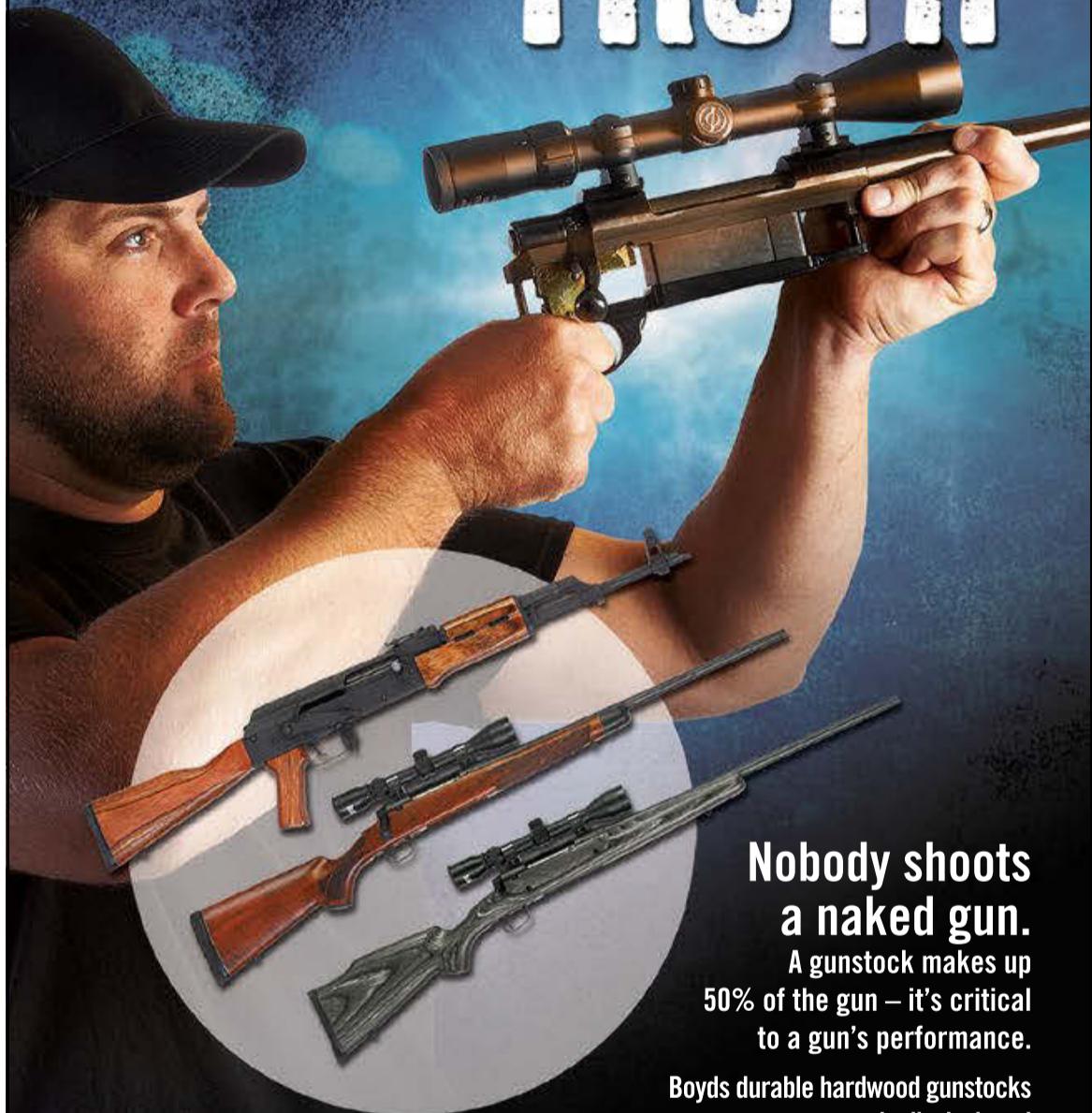




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COVERT

Suppressed 9x39mm

BY MAXIM POPENKER



Since its inception soon after World War II, the Soviet Army's Spetsnaz troops possessed a significant arsenal of silenced and noiseless weapons, mostly handguns.

The nature of the Spetsnaz operations, however, was much more broad and often required the engagement of targets at longer ranges without attracting undue attention.

The simplest and earliest approach was tried during WWII, when Army recon units were issued with the so-called "Bramit device," a clip-on silencer for a Mosin-Nagant M1891/30 rifle developed shortly before the war by the Mitin brothers. This was a more or less conventional expansion-type silencer with two rubber baffles. It was to be used only with special cartridges, loaded with a standard L-type ball bullet and about a third of the standard powder

charge. Rifles equipped with Bramit silencers were used throughout the war to good effect behind German lines, taking out sentries, guard dogs and other targets.

After the war, the Soviet Army changed its main rifle from the long and powerful, but slow-firing, bolt-action rifle to the much more compact and somewhat less powerful (in terms of bullet energy, not firepower) Kalashnikov AK. During the late 1950s, Soviet designers developed the first quick-detach silencer for the Kalashnikov AK rifle, known as the PBS (*Pribor dlya Beshumnoj Strelby*, or "device for noiseless firing").

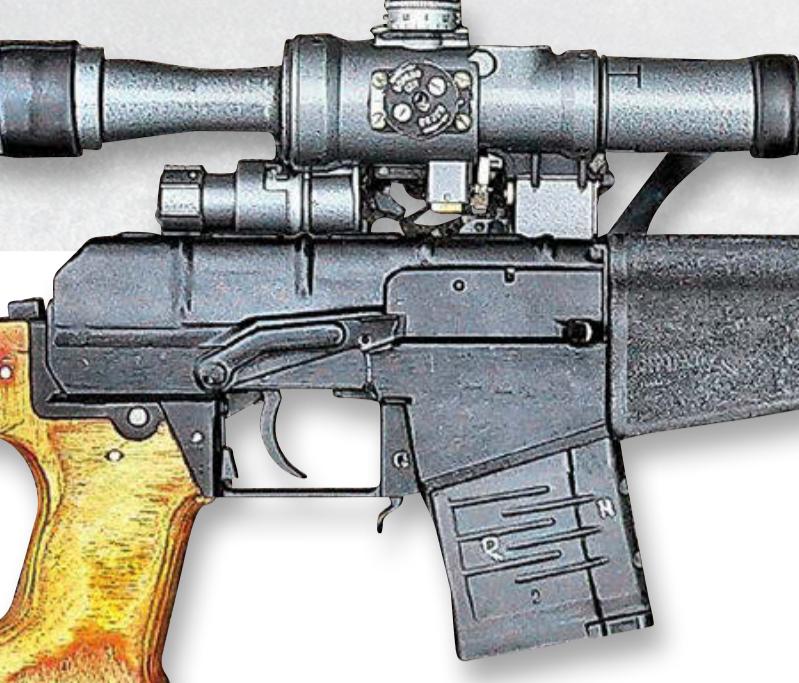
The device was fitted with a removable rubber baffle that was used to increase barrel pressure during the discharge, and thus ensure reliable gas operation with reduced subsonic loads. During the early 1960s, this design was improved and manufactured as the PBS-1. The rubber baffle (which has a service life of about

200 rounds) was retained. These silencers were to be used only with US (*Umenshennaya Skorost* or "reduced velocity") ammunition, which fired a specially designed bullet of increased weight at subsonic velocities. The typical 7.62x39mm US round was loaded with a bullet weighing 193 grains and propelled to a muzzle velocity of about 885 to 950 feet per second (fps).

Subsonic R&D

As time passed, the nature of typical targets and the potential operation profiles for Spetsnaz troops changed. For one, the NATO forces began to issue body armor on an increased scale, and the basic combination of the AKM, PBS and US ammunition was no longer effective enough. As a result, during the late 1970s, a research program for a new Spetsnaz long arm was ordered.

The task was handed over to the Central Institute of the Precision Machine



VSS VINTOREZ

Top: VSS sniper rifle in its basic configuration, with 4x PSO-1-1 scope. Bottom: AS assault rifle, customized to the tactical needs of a Russian police officer. Rifle sports image intensifying night sight on a side rail, and folding forward grip and tactical light on custom-made mounts.

AS VAL

FIREPOWER

assault and sniper rifles of Russia's elite Spetsnaz forces.

building (TsNII TochMash), which was responsible for most of the developments in the field of special-purpose small arms and ammunition in the USSR. By 1983 the two prime customers for the proposed weapons, the GRU (Intelligence Department of the Army General Staff) and KGB finally agreed on a set of technical requirements for a new silenced sniper rifle. The new research program was named *Vintorez*, or "thread cutter." As usual with Soviet code-names, the name has no practical meaning.

According to the specification, the new weapon was to be effective against enemy personnel at extended ranges. It also had to reliably penetrate a typical steel helmet at the same range. Live-fire trials proved that the readily available 7.62x39mm US ammunition was not up to the task and new ammunition had to be developed. Several approaches were tried, including combinations of the 7.62x25mm TT case and 7.62

7N1 bullet (a sniper-grade, steel-cored bullet for the 7.62x54R cartridge). This "Frankenstein" round was accurate enough, but lacked the necessary penetration and was soon abandoned.

A shortened (to 28mm) and necked-up 5.45x39mm case combined with a specially designed 7.62mm AP bullet was tried next. This round showed much potential, but a change in requirements, which happened in 1985, effectively killed it. The reason for this was that the GRU and KGB now also requested a silenced assault rifle, one that fired the same type of subsonic ammunition but was capable of penetrating military-grade body armor (with steel or titanium armor plates). After examination of the updated requirements, developers decided to create a completely new family of rounds capable of the necessary accuracy, range and penetration while maintaining subsonic muzzle velocities.

The new ammunition was based on the readily available 7.62x39mm M43 steel case, necked-up to 9mm and loaded with long and heavy bullets. For sniper work, developers created a more or less typical steel/lead core jacketed ball bullet. For assault work they created a special AP round with a hardened steel core that projects forward from the jacket. Upon impacting an armor plate, the bullet jacket was stripped off and the penetrator is then free to punch a neat hole through the plate, the underlying Kevlar and the poor guy who happened to cross the path of the Spetsnaz operator. The sniper ball round was designated 9x39 SP-5, and the assault/AP round the 9x39 SP-6. With ammunition now available, designers quickly finalized the design of the sniper rifle, which was officially adopted by the Army and KGB in 1987 as the "9mm *Vintovka Snayperskay Specialnaya VSS*," or "9mm Special Sniper Rifle."

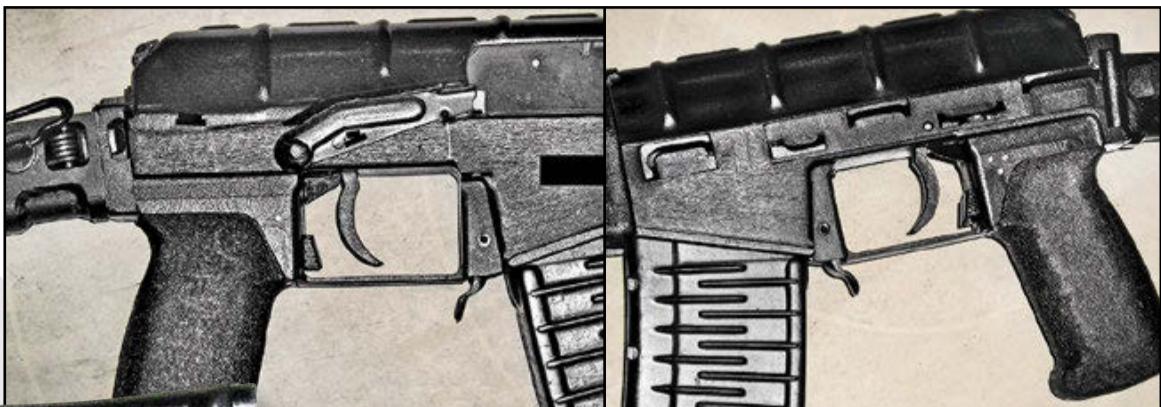


COVERT FIREPOWER



Distinguishing features of the AS are its polymer furniture, sturdy side-folding stock and a 20-round mag — all standard issue.

The machined steel receiver of the AS Val rifle, showcasing its AK-style safety and separate fire selector lever behind the trigger.



The VSS was quite unusual by typical Western standards for a sniper rifle. It was not only semi-automatic, but actually a select-fire weapon issued with 10- and 20-round magazines. Noise reduction was achieved by using a fairly conventional silencer that was made of steel and integrated into the gun design. The rifle was normally equipped with a 4x PSO-1-1 telescopic sight (the same as used on the Dragunov SVD rifle, but with a reticle that was adapted for the 9mm round) or the NSPU-3 night sight. Both sights were installed using a standard side rail on the left side of the receiver. Iron sights were provided in the standard configuration as a backup measure.

The rifle was quite compact, reliable and accurate enough for its intended purpose, and it quickly became very popular among its users. Once the design of the sniper rifle proved itself satisfactory, it was quickly modified into a suppressed assault rifle with a minimum of modifications. The basic gas-operated action remained the same, but the wooden, skeletonized stock was replaced with a metal side-folding stock, and some minor changes were made to the barrel to better withstand automatic firing (the VSS was to be used in full-automatic mode only under emergency conditions).

The new rifle was designated "9mm Avtomat Specialnyj AS" (AS Special Automatic Rifle) and put into production alongside the VSS at the Tula arms factory. The AS is also often referred in literature as "Val" ("Shaft"), as it was the codename for the project used during its development. Like the VSS, the AS became quite popular among its users, and is still widely used by special elements of the Russian Army and law enforcement units. The VSS and AS were used during the closing years of the Soviet campaign in Afghanistan, but earned their real fame during several bloody campaigns against separatists, terrorists and various bandits in Chechnya, a mountainous semi-independent republic within the

Russian Federation. The AS and VSS were prized by both sides for their stealthiness and excellent stopping power, especially when compared with the "tiny" 5.45mm bullets fired from standard issue AK-74 assault rifles. The AS became very popular for urban operations, especially for house clearing, as it was not so loud as to deafen the operators and their teammates when firing indoors, and was lethal even when firing through barriers and body armor. These weapons also became quite useful for other police operations, mostly against organized crime gangs such as drug traffickers. Today both the AS and VSS are manufactured in limited numbers and issued to special operations units of the Russian Army, Federal Security Service (FSB) and SWAT-type police units across Russia.

Ammo Upgrade

All 9x39mm ammunition is loaded into Berdan-primed steel cases with a lacquer coating. No headstamps are provided on SP-5 and SP-6 ammunition. SP-5 bullets are fully jacketed, with a tombac-plated steel jacket. The core is of the combination type—the front part of the core is made from steel, the rear from lead. Bullet weight is 260 grains, muzzle velocity approximately 920 fps.

SP-6 bullets are semi-jacketed with the same tombac-plated steel jacket, but the pointed steel core/penetrator projects from the front of the bullet, and the space between the penetrator and the jacket is filled with a thin layer of lead. The penetrator is made from hardened tool-grade steel and usually separates from the jacket when hitting armor plating or other hard barriers: The penetrator goes inside the target while the jacket remains outside of the barrier/armor plate. Bullet weight is 247 grains and muzzle velocity is also about 920 fps.

Recently, a new type of 9x39mm ammunition was adopted for use in the VSS. Known as SPP, it combines an exposed, armor-piercing front core with lead filling at the rear and precision assembly procedures, to provide snipers with a more accurate AP round. It is marked with a light blue tip.

SPECIFICATIONS

AS VAL

- CALIBER:** 9x39mm
- BARREL:** 7.9 inches
- OA LENGTH:** 24.2-34.5 inches
- WEIGHT:** 6.5 pounds
- STOCK:** Polymer
- SIGHTS:** Front post, rear notch
- ACTION:** Gas-operated
- FINISH:** Matte black
- CAPACITY:** 10+1, 20+1
- RATE OF FIRE:** 700-800 rpm





The VSS rifle sports the same controls as the AS, but features a removable laminated wood stock and is normally issued with 4x scope.

Spec Ops Hardware

The AS is a gas-operated, integrally suppressed weapon. The receiver is machined from a steel forging for improved strength and durability. The long-stroke gas piston is located above the barrel and is rigidly attached to the bolt carrier. The rotating bolt has six radial lugs and locks into the receiver. The front part of the barrel, ahead of the gas port, has several sets of holes that are drilled at the bottom of the rifling grooves. These holes are used to bleed some of the gas into the integral sound suppressor.

The trigger unit is somewhat similar to that of the Czech-made Sa. Vz. 58 assault rifle and is striker-fired. The striker spring is located below the bolt return spring, and both springs are assembled into the captive unit with spring guides and a polymer bolt buffer attached to the rear plate of the unit. The safety lever is similar to the one found on all Kalashnikov-type rifles, but the fire mode selector is a separate lever located within the triggerguard. The lever positions are marked with white dots on the pistol grip—three dots on the left side mark the full-auto setting and a single dot on the right marks single-shot mode.

The tangent-type rear sight has a typical U-shaped notch and is graduated up to 400 meters in 25-meter increments, but the actual effective range is about 200 to 300 meters due to the rainbow-shaped trajectory of the subsonic bullets. It is interesting to note that both rear and front sights are installed on the suppressor body rather than on the barrel or the receiver. The front sight is a protected post that can be adjusted for zeroing. The side rail for day/night scope mounting is machined on the left side of the receiver. The VSS has a slightly different rear sight, which is graduated for SP-5 sniper ball ammunition, with settings between 100 and 420 meters, in tens of meters. Between 100 and 200 meters, the sight is graduated in 50-meter increments, but beyond 200 meters the graduations are in 20- and 30-meter increments.

The integral sound suppressor is of a conventional expansion type. Its rear part, which

is located around the barrel, serves as an expansion chamber, and the front part has four baffles that are made from stamped steel and welded into the single, removable unit. The suppressor is attached to the gun via the short thread at the front of the barrel, and its co-axial alignment with the bore is ensured by the supporting ring, installed on the barrel at the front of the handguard. The lock is located at the bottom of the handguard.

The furniture of the AS consists of a short polymer forend, a polymer pistol grip and a side-folding, skeletonized shoulder stock (made of steel tubes) with a plastic buttplate. It folds to the left side of the gun and does not interfere with the controls, so the AS can be fired with the stock folded. The VSS has a similar forend, but the Dragunov-type shoulder stock is made from laminated wood and is integral with the pistol grip. It can be detached for transportation and storage, thanks to the dovetailed mount located on the bottom of receiver, just behind the triggerguard. Both weapons have standard sling swivels.

The AS is optimized for high-performance, armor-piercing 9x39mm ammunition, designated as SP-6, but can also fire the ball-type SP-5 ammunition intended for VSS sniper rifles. The VSS, which is optimized for SP-5 ball ammo, also can fire SP-6 AP ammunition, but it is not normally recommended due to increased wear of the accurized barrel. The AS is usually issued with 20-round, double-stack, double-feed magazines made from plastic. VSS rifles are usually issued with 10-round plastic magazines of similar design, which are compatible with 20-round magazines.

The AS is most often used with basic iron sights, although some users try and customize their weapons to better suit their preferences and the combat environment. The VSS is usually issued with the 4x PSO-1-1 telescopic sight or with the NSPU-3 IR/night sight using special quick-detach mounts on the side rail. Both of these interesting and unique firearms provided operators with capable, quiet and deadly weapons that could help them effectively fulfill their missions. ★

Both rifles are equipped with iron sights. Shown here is the VSS rear sight, marked between 100 and 420 meters in 20- and 30-meter increments.

Quite unusual, both front and rear sights are installed on the removable suppressor body rather than on the barrel or receiver.



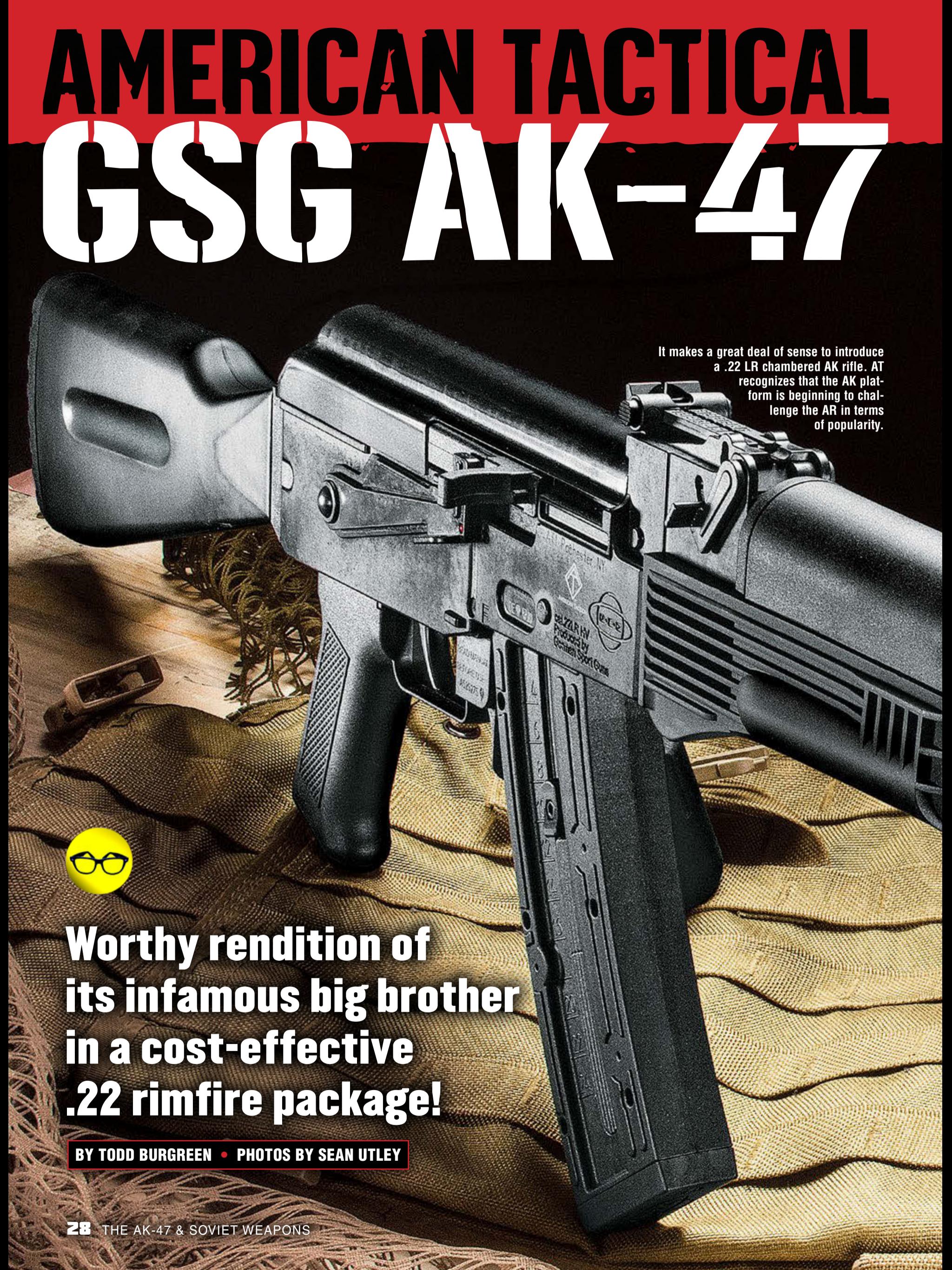
SPECIFICATIONS

VSS VINTOREZ

CALIBER:	9x39mm
BARREL:	7.9 inches
OA LENGTH:	35.2 inches
WEIGHT:	5.7 pounds
STOCK:	Wood
SIGHTS:	PSO-1 telescopic, iron
ACTION:	Gas-operated
FINISH:	Matte black
CAPACITY:	10+1, 20+1
RATE OF FIRE:	600 rpm



AMERICAN TACTICAL GSG AK-47



It makes a great deal of sense to introduce a .22 LR chambered AK rifle. AT recognizes that the AK platform is beginning to challenge the AR in terms of popularity.

**Worthy rendition of
its infamous big brother
in a cost-effective
.22 rimfire package!**

BY TODD BURGREEN • PHOTOS BY SEAN UTLEY



American Tactical (AT) has reacted to powerful market forces with one of its offerings—the GSG AK-47 chambered in .22 LR.

Many are searching for ways to maintain or increase proficiency without having to spend disproportionate amounts of their individual budgets on centerfire ammunition. The advantage of having an “understudy” rifle chambered in .22 LR and similar in ergonomics and controls to its full-powered sibling is well recognized.

The idea of shooting a .22 LR out of an AR is not a new concept. Various kits are on the market that enable users to substitute bolt carriers into their AR, allowing shooters to benefit from firing the inexpensive .22 LR in full-size ARs for training purposes without having to invest

in a new rifle. The same .22 LR concept for an AK is not as simple as switching uppers or select-

ing from the plethora of .22 LR-chambered ARs on the market. The AT GSG AK-47 .22 LR solves the dilemma.

It makes a lot of sense to introduce a .22 LR-chambered AK rifle. The AK platform is beginning to challenge the AR in terms of popularity here in the U.S. among knowledgeable practitioners of personal security; this is not said to spark controversy, I’m only stating an opinion backed by years of observation in and around the gun culture. While there is no debate that the AR is the best-selling rifle model in America, serious students of personal defense who do not rely on logistical support from a department or agency have come to appreciate what the AK offers in terms of performance. AK simplicity should not be confused with lack of refinement. As experience and knowledge have matured, the reliability and solid performance of the AK have become more entrenched in my mind as the standard.

What more can be written about Mikhail Kalashnikov’s ubiquitous AK? Models/versions proliferate around the world and now are spreading across the land of its Cold

War nemesis, the M16/AR-15. Despite the nefarious 1989 import ban and the expired 1994 Assault Weapons Ban, the AK series of weapons have never been as popular in the U.S. as now—either in the AK-47/AKM 7.62x39mm, AK-74 5.45x39mm or Saiga S12 12-gauge variants. The true hallmark of the AK-series of rifles gain-

ing acceptance in the U.S. is the rise of gunsmiths and aftermarket accessories starting to cater to its clientele, as well as variants such as this AT-imported rimfire.

An often-heard knock against the AK is its lack of good ergonomics when compared to most Western designs, such as the AR-15. The atmosphere cultivated in the Soviet Union (indeed, in Russia before and after the Soviet Union), was not one of individual comfort, but rather effectiveness and maximum production. With that said, many find the standard AK’s pistol grip and stock just fine. Yes, the AK buttstock as it arrives from the factory features a shorter length of pull than its U.S. counterpart. As most realize, this is not a crippling hindrance to effectiveness once explored during training. However, as with most things firearms related, personal preference and opinions will vary with decisions made on what satisfies each individual’s needs. The extra time spent with an understudy weapon such as the AK-47 serves to quicken one’s learning curve in terms of weapon manipulation and operating controls.

Gun Details

AT has brought something original to the U.S. market in the form of the .22 LR AK-47 through a design that began from the ground up to accommodate the .22 LR in a package simulating a full-size AK in terms of weight



An AK-100 series-style buttstock is used with the American Tactical GSG AK-47.



The composite pistol grip features molded-in checkered panels for enhanced handling.



(Top) Pivoting AK safety lever allows for realistic training techniques.
(Bottom) Accessory rail is found on the left side.



A traditional-style AK rear sight is used on the rimfire for an authentic sight picture that makes it ideal as an "understudy" weapon.

and balance. AT stresses in its literature that the AK-47 represents much more than a small-caliber "knock-off" of the famous AK. The GSG AK-47 is a rifle featuring quality German engineering and manufacturing that strives to give the end user the same feel as the ever-prolific AK-47 series of weapons. The AK-47 .22 LR appears to be patterned after the updated AK-100 series of rifles.

The AK-100 variants are post-Cold War AKs based on the AK-74 assault rifle. The AK-100 series were born from the AK-74M, which featured polymer-constructed forends and buttstocks. The entire AK-100 series is a family of assault rifles based around standardized parts but with different caliber chamberings—5.56mm, 5.45mm and 7.62x39mm. The AK-100 assault rifle series uses plastics instead of wood in its construction and uses somewhat higher production standards. Ultimately, they were meant mostly for export instead of domestic use, especially the 5.56mm-chambered variants. Most of the metal work is of steel with a black phosphate finish. The AK-100 series barrels are cold-hammer forged and tipped with advanced muzzle brakes. Introduced in the 1990s, most AK-100 series rifles produced are the 5.45mm or 7.62x39mm versions. Most of the AK-100 series ended up being used by Airborne, air assault, special operations or VIP-protection units, but perhaps 5,000 or so made it into the international market and, somewhat ironically, were primarily bought by Americans.

Importantly, the AT AK-47 kept AK controls such as the safety, charging handle, magazine-release and bolt-release levers in the same place as 7.62x39mm- and 5.45x39mm-chambered AK rifles. The 17.5-inch-barreled .22 LR AK-47 weighs

approximately 7 pounds. The fixed stock gives it an overall length of 36.5 inches.

Features that make the AK popular are present on the .22 LR AK-47 as well, including open sights that replicate the sight picture of standard AKs. Many may not want to utilize the AK-47 as simply an understudy weapon and instead enjoy it as a stand-alone .22 LR in its own right. GSG's attention to detail extends to AK-47's magazine design. The 10-round magazine shipped with the AK-47 is of similar dimensions to standard 30-round AK magazines. This further duplicates the similarity of handling and manual of arms between the AK-47 and centerfire variants. The same web gear and magazine pouches utilized for AK magazines will work for the AK-47 magazine. This model does have a magazine-disconnect safety feature, meaning that a magazine needs to be inserted before the trigger group will fire. However, in my opinion, this is not as big a deal on a rifle chambered in .22 LR as it would be with a rifle chambered in a centerfire caliber more likely to be used in a hostile engagement.

The AK-47 breaks down differently than its centerfire AK sibling due to it being blow-back-operated versus gas-operated. A convenient multi-tool is shipped with the rifle to facilitate rear stock mounting, takedown procedures, sight adjustment as well as removing the barrel muzzle nut.

The bolt assembly is a one-piece affair versus the bolt carrier group and recoil spring found on the centerfire variant AK. The top cover is removable, allowing one to see the differences between the .22 LR action and centerfire action. The AK-47 requires the stock to be removed in order to access to the rear trunnion area. Fasteners are

SPECIFICATIONS

AT GSG AK-47

CALIBER:	.22 LR
BARREL:	17.5 inches
OA LENGTH:	36.5 inches
WEIGHT:	7 pounds (empty)
STOCK:	Polymer
SIGHTS:	Open
ACTION:	Semi-auto
FINISH:	Matte black
CAPACITY:	10+1
MSRP:	\$416





removed with the provided multi-tool, facilitating takedown and allowing removal of the pistol grip and blowback bolt group. The GSG manual presents this via detailed instructions. The only questioning observation I have with the AK-47 is why the muzzle does not have exterior threads that would allow it to be equipped with an AK-style flash suppressor of some type. A screw-in simulated muzzle nut is in place that threads into the sight-block base. However, an exterior-threaded barrel would have enabled shooters an easy method to mount a suppressor on the AK-47, if so desired.

At The Range

Range visits further sealed my original good impression of the AK-47. This AK does everything a .22 LR should do, such as provide solid accuracy and reliable semi-automatic fire, enhancing the marksmanship capabilities of shooters of all skill levels. AT takes this one step further with the AK-47 through enabling it to serve as an understudy to its centerfire AK brethren.

Range testing consisted of normal firing from the bench for accuracy assessment of CCI AR Tactical 40-grain, Federal AutoMatch 40-grain and CCI Mini-Mag 36-grain HP (hollow-point) loads. Groups at 25 yards were in the 1-inch area, and 3 inches at 50 yards. This is more than accurate enough for a rifle meant to be shot from standing, kneeling or similar shooting positions away from the bench using AK-pattern open sights. The AK-47 also has an AK side-rail scope



A faux muzzle nut completes the GSG AK-47's aesthetics.

mount if a user wants to mount a magnified optic or red-dot sight.

The AK-47 can fall in line with the traditional .22 LR role of introducing new shooters to the sport. Trigger control and steady hold can be perfected with the minimal recoil and blast associated with .22 LR. Proper sight alignment and trigger control are also easy to self-diagnose with the .22 LR. The economic advantages of the .22 LR are again a major plus; inexperienced shooters can afford to practice much longer with the .22 LR. The AK-47 has the added benefit of training shooters of all skill levels in AK manipulation techniques. The low cost of shooting .22 LR ammunition is attractive, but not at

the expense of an unfamiliar rifle with awkward controls and an uncertain reliability aspect, an issue only compounded by not getting any training value out of range time with your primary weapon. Fortunately for those who like military rifles, all of these issues were not a factor with the AK-47. The look, feel and controls are nearly identical to its popular big brother. From the first time the AK-47 was handled, it was noted that the shooter had the same feel as if shooting an AK-47 or AK-74. Whether it is for low-cost realistic training or to help a youngster learn to handle this style, the AK-47 will make a nice addition to any firearms collection. For more information, visit americantactical.us or call 800-290-0065. ★

Load	Velocity	Accuracy
CCI AR Tactical 40	1,215	3.00
CCI Mini-Mag 36 HP	1,265	3.20
Federal Auto Match 40	1,210	3.60

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by chronograph and accuracy in inches for five-shot groups at 50 yards.

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CZECHPOINT vz.

**Czech-born warrior blends
classic lines with modern upgrades!**



BY PAUL SCARLATA • PHOTOS BY STEVE WOODS

The central European nation of Czechoslovakia had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire since the 1520s, but in the aftermath of World War I it regained its independence.

An industrial center since the 17th century, Czechoslovakia was known for its high-quality small arms, and in 1919 *Ceská Zbrojovka* (better known as CZ) was established and quickly became a major player in the post-war international small-arms market.

After a Soviet-backed coup in 1948, Czechoslovakia became a Russian satellite state and joined the Warsaw Pact. But the country maintained its tradition of issuing its armed forces Czech-designed and manufactured weapons. In preference to the Soviet SKS carbine, in 1952 it adopted a CZ-designed semi-auto rifle, the 7.62mm *Samonabíjecí puška vzor 52*, which fired a proprietary cartridge—the 7.62mm *náboj vzor 52*.

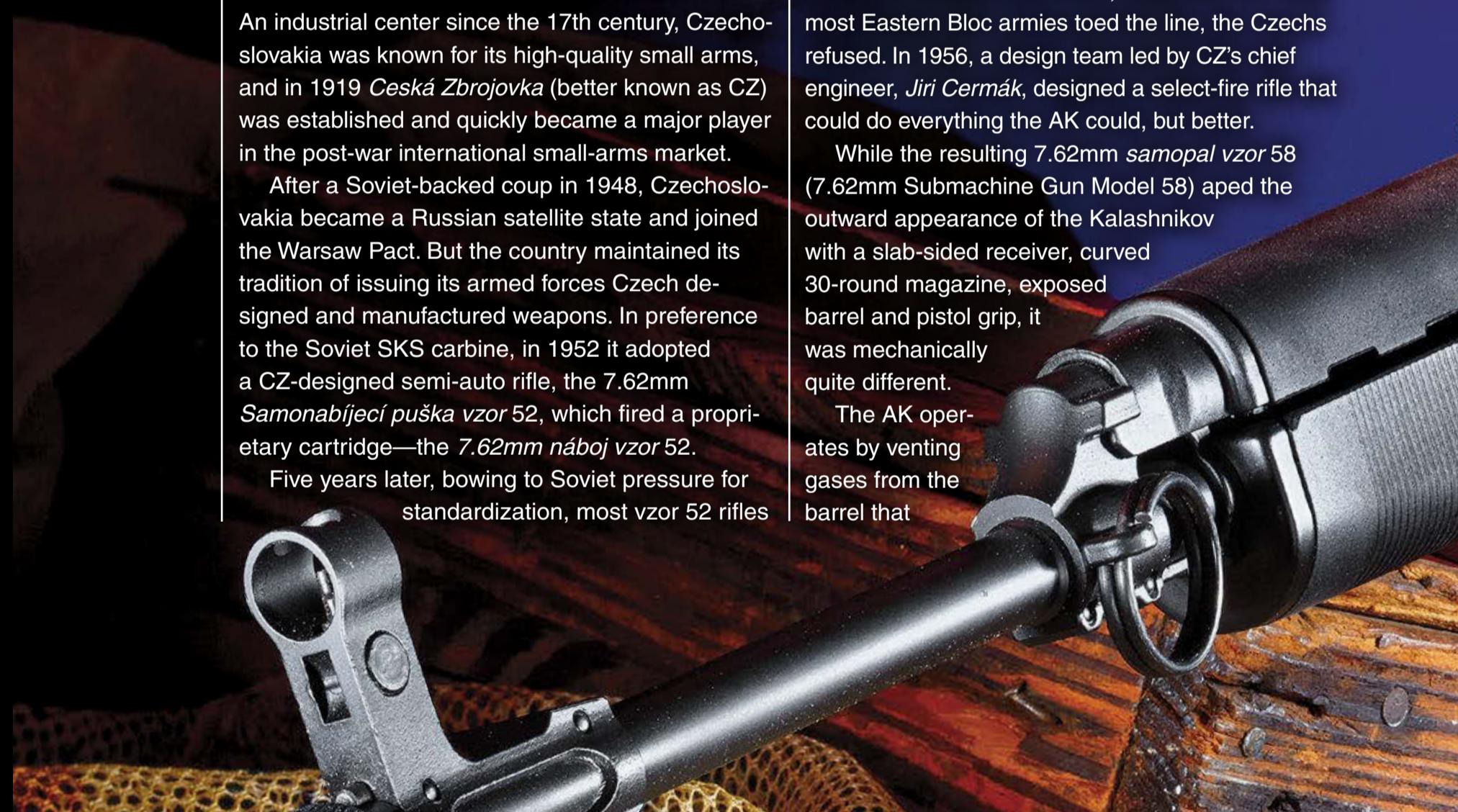
Five years later, bowing to Soviet pressure for standardization, most vzor 52 rifles

were converted to fire the Soviet 7.62mm *patron obr. 1943g* (7.62x39mm), known in Czechoslovak service as the 7.62mm *náboj vzor 43*.

The USSR pressured all Warsaw Pact armies to standardize on Soviet-pattern weapons, which, when it came to shoulder-fired arms, meant the AK. While most Eastern Bloc armies toed the line, the Czechs refused. In 1956, a design team led by CZ's chief engineer, *Jiri Cermák*, designed a select-fire rifle that could do everything the AK could, but better.

While the resulting 7.62mm *samopal vzor 58* (7.62mm Submachine Gun Model 58) aped the outward appearance of the Kalashnikov with a slab-sided receiver, curved 30-round magazine, exposed barrel and pistol grip, it was mechanically quite different.

The AK operates by venting gases from the barrel that





58 TACTICAL. 556



The CzechPoint vz. 58 Tactical 556 brings 5.56mm firepower and modern upgrades to the classic platform. Shown equipped with an Aimpoint Micro T-1. (Below far left) These vz. 58-armed Czech troops are serving with UN forces in Kosovo. (Below center and right) These Czech troops in Afghanistan have equipped their vz. 58s with M4-style stocks, optical sights and forends with rails.





CzechPoint's
vz. 58 Tactical 556 fea-
tures upgrades that bring
the classic design
in line with modern
AR-based weapons.

The front sight is a hooded post while the muzzle brake features eight ports that vent powder gases upward to hold down muzzle flip.

move a gas piston affixed to the bolt carrier rearward, rotating and unlocking the bolt before pushing it to the rear; this extracts and ejects the fired cartridge case and cocks the hammer. The recoil spring pushes it forward, stripping the next round from the magazine and chambering it as the bolt is rotated once again, locking it into battery.

The vzor 58 also uses gases bled into a cylinder above the barrel to push a chromium-plated piston rearward, where it impacts the bolt carrier and drives it to the rear while the piston is pulled forward by a separate spring. The gas cylinder is then vented and the remaining gases are exhausted into the atmosphere via two ports in the cylinder.

A wedge on the bolt carrier lifts the pivoting locking breech block out of recesses in the receiver, allowing the entire unit to move rearward, extracting and ejecting the spent cartridge case while cocking the striker. The recoil spring then pushes the bolt carrier forward, stripping the next round from the magazine and chambering it as the breech block is cammed down, locking it to the receiver. Where the AK-47 used a pivoting hammer, the vzor 58 utilized a straight-line striker to fire the cartridge.

The vzor 58's receiver was machined from solid steel and the AK's awkward safety/selector lever was replaced by a conveniently located rotating switch on the right side of the receiver, which is easier—and quieter—in operation.

In the forward position, the bolt carrier seals the entire receiver, keeping debris out of the action. Unlike AK-type weapons,

the vzor 58's bolt locks open when the magazine is empty, and there is a bolt hold-open catch located next to the paddle-shaped magazine release.

Battle Tested

The vzor 58 entered service in late 1959. Reportedly, they were first seen in combat during the genocidal Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), while others showed up in the hands of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese during the conflict in Vietnam. Eventually, Soviet proxies in Asia, Africa and Latin America received them, and they also saw wide use by militants in the Middle East.

After the collapse of the USSR, the Czechs began divesting themselves of large stockpiles of older weaponry, and vzor 58s began showing up in just about any trouble spot around the globe where Soviet-caliber small arms were common. So, it is not surprising that large numbers of them are being used in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In 1993, the citizens of Czechoslovakia peacefully divided the country into two independent states: the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Both nations became members of NATO and vzor 58-equipped Czech and Slovak units have served with UN and NATO forces in Bosnia, Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Afghanistan, Kosovo and with Coalition forces in Iraq. Photographic evidence shows that Czech soldiers serving in Afghanistan have equipped their vz. 58s with tactical lights, lasers and M4-style, collapsible buttstocks.

The Czechs are currently replacing their Soviet-caliber weapons with NATO-caliber

SPECIFICATIONS

CZECHPOINT VZ.58 TACTICAL 556

CALIBER: 5.56x45mm

BARREL: 16.14 inches

OA LENGTH: 35-38.3 inches

WEIGHT: 7.37 pounds (empty)

STOCK: M4, six-position

SIGHTS: Rear notch, front post

ACTION: Semi-auto, piston-operated

FINISH: Matte black

CAPACITY: 30+1

MSRP: \$1,165





When forward the bolt carrier completely seals the receiver from debris. When open it allows complete, reliable ejection of spent cases. Note the safety selector above the pistol grip.

arms and have adopted the CZ-designed *Pušca* CZ805 chambered for the 5.56mm *náboj* NATO (5.56x45mm).

Tactical Import

CzechPoint has been importing vz. 58-type rifles assembled by Czech Small Arms (formerly known as D-Technik) in Jablunka, Czech Republic, for several years now. Besides rifles in the original 7.62x39mm-caliber, it now offers a model chambered for the 5.56x45mm/.223 cartridge—the vz. 58 Tactical 556.

In order to satisfy BATFE import requirements, the company uses entirely new receivers that have thicker sidewalls, which allows optic side rails to be mounted on them. This also prevents the installation of any of the original full-auto components. In addition a long, steel bracket (known as a “bridge”) is located in front of the trigger and prevents a full-auto trip arm from being installed. The rifle comes with a side rail already installed for mounting optic sights (sight mounts are optional).

In compliance with 18 U.S.C. 925(d)(3), CzechPoint adds American-made parts so as to legally reconfigure the firearm with a separate pistol grip and stock. To fully comply with Title 18, U.S.C., Section 922(r), all CzechPoint vz. 58 Tactical 556 rifles capable of using 30-round magazines possess five U.S.-made parts: sear, disconnector (both made from 4140 steel), trigger (glass-filled nylon), M4 adjustable stock, and removable muzzle brake.

The M4 stock is the mil-spec TAPCO AR T6 six-position stock with a TAPCO mil-spec extension tube. The forearm, handguard and pistol grip are both made from black polymer.

The rifles are fitted with new barrels manufactured by Lothar Walther in Germany from 4340 chrome molybdenum steel, and they feature chrome-lined chambers and bores. An eight-port muzzle brake is removable and the thread pattern is the standard vz. 58 thread pattern. Each rifle comes with a pair of clear, polycarbonate, 30-round magazines. CzechPoint also offers a magazine well adapter that permits the use of standard AR-15/M16 magazines. For those of you who live in states with magazine restrictions, CzechPoint also offers the vz. 58 Liberty 556CSM, which ships with one 10-round magazine attached to the rifle with a magazine block.

Trigger Time

Last year I tested a CzechPoint SA vz. 58 rifle and found it to be more accurate and user-friendly than many AKs I have fired



The Tapco M4-style buttstock can be adjusted to six positions for storage and to fit the individual shooter.



“ WHERE THE AK-47 USED A PIVOTING HAMMER, THE VZOR 58 UTILIZED A STRAIGHT-LINE STRIKER TO FIRE THE CARTRIDGE. ”

PERFORMANCE CZECHPOINT VZ. 58 TACTICAL 556 5.56x45MM

Load	Velocity	Accuracy
American Eagle 55 FMJ	3,109	2.80
Black Hills 68 Match HP	2,764	2.00
Winchester 50 Silvertip	3,302	2.50
Wolf 55 FMJ	3,094	3.30

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by chronograph and accuracy in inches for five-shot groups at 100 yards.

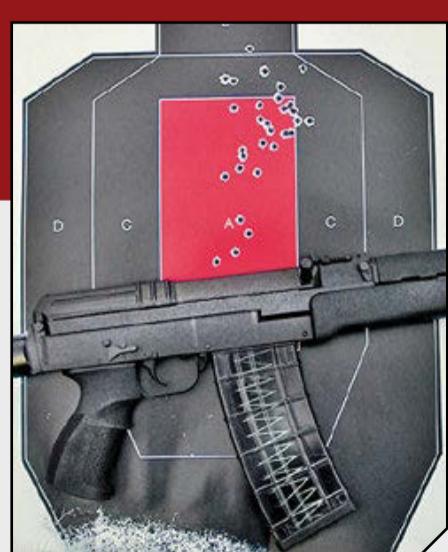


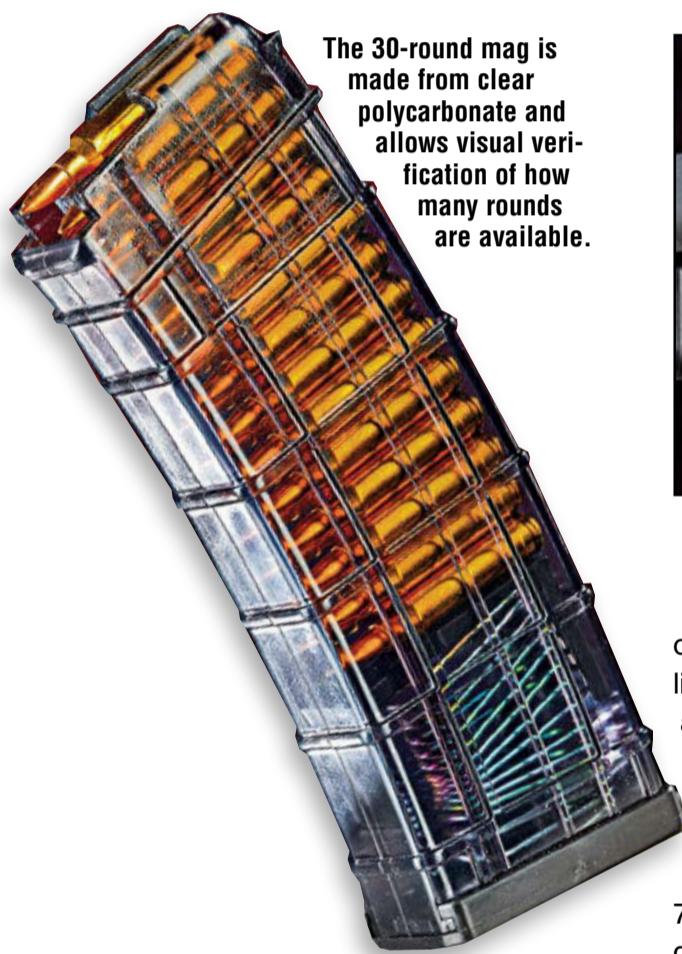
Photo courtesy by Paul Scarlata

★★★ CZECHPOINT VZ. 58 TACTICAL 556



(Left) The forend and handguard are made from high impact black polymer.

(Right) The ergonomic pistol grip is also made from black polymer.



The 30-round mag is made from clear polycarbonate and allows visual verification of how many rounds are available.



The CzechPoint vz. 58 Tactical 556 features an optics rail mounted on the left side of the receiver, allowing the supplemental use of optics in addition to the iron sights.

over the years. So, when I was asked if I'd like to test the Tactical 556 rifle, it took me about half a second to say yes!

I was impressed with the rifle I received from CzechPoint. It was well balanced, came up to my shoulder easily and felt lighter than its rated weight of 7.37 pounds. While I continue to be befuddled by the use of open sights on Eastern European military rifles, I must admit those on the Tactical 556 provided a relatively fast and clear sight picture. The trigger had a bit of take-up before breaking cleanly with 5.5 pounds of pressure.

The next day, my fiancée, Becky, and I loaded the necessary gear into my truck and we headed out to the range to see how the vz. 58 would perform. CzechPoint included a 10-round magazine with the rifle, which enabled me to test fire it from my Caldwell Lead Sled. Before some of the readers begin scoffing at me for firing a light-recoiling 5.56mm rifle thusly, I would like to remind them that it provides secure and consistent positioning, which makes for much more accurate shooting.

We set up a series of targets on the 100-yard backstop, and with Becky behind the spotting scope I settled down and began to shoot for score with four different brands of ammunition. When Becky told

me that my very first shot entered the first target's X-ring, my hopes went up, and as I continued firing my expectations were exceeded! Of the 12 targets, nine had five bullet holes inside or touching the 10-ring, while the remaining three each had a single round in the 10-ring. The best group, fired with the Black Hills 68-grain hollow points, measured exactly 2 inches, and none of the other groups exceeded 3.8 inches in size.

I then placed a target out at 75 yards and, firing off-hand, proceeded to send a full magazine of 5.56mm ammunition down-range in its direction. Once again, this *eské krásy* (Czech beauty) showed that it could do what was needed to be done and put—with a bit of help from yours truly—each of the 30 rounds in the target, with the vast majority in the A zone. Yup, this was one shooting machine!

All in all, we were impressed with CzechPoint's vz. 58 Tactical 5.56 rifle. It proved surprisingly accurate, 100-percent reliable with the 200+ rounds Becky and I ran through it that morning, and a heck of a lot of fun to shoot in the bargain. If you're looking for a fine-shooting semi-automatic 5.56mm rifle that will stand out in the usual crowd of ARs at the range, it might just be the rifle for you. For more information, visit czechpoint-usa.com.



“ I WAS IMPRESSED WITH THE RIFLE I RECEIVED FROM CZECHPOINT. IT WAS WELL BALANCED, CAME UP TO MY SHOULDER EASILY AND FELT LIGHTER THAN ITS RATED WEIGHT OF 7.37 POUNDS. ”

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- International Patents Pending
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While not configured to its original pattern, this M92 was built using an American made receiver and new parts kit and is a fantastic rifle perfectly suited to CQB work.

BY DAVID BAHDE

About a year ago, the chance to test a custom-built Yugo M92 presented itself.

While it would have traditionally had an underfolding stock, this Yugo M92 kit was built on an American receiver using a sidefolding stock. Underfolders are fine for purists, and they keep things “real,” but for me they are all but useless. They are just too long and unwieldy to suit me, so the folder was a nice touch. It was fun to shoot and I have always wanted a “Krink” or a similar AK with a short barrel.

As a result, I decided that I wanted to take on a build project of my own. New M92 kits were still available at the time so one was ordered for a build more in line with what I wanted. When shooting an AK, the standard Warsaw-length stock remains my preference. Folders are great for storage and can be really solid, but nothing beats a regular stock if you are going to spend serious time on the range. A standard rear trunnion also provides for more versatility, since there are several solid folders that can be mounted without cutting your gun up.

My Class 2 manufacturing FFL made things a bit easier on this project, but when it came time to put things together there was a need for some assistance. Riveting was going to be done inhouse, but looking at some of the kit systems out there, the results just did not satisfy me, nor did the thought of investing in the equipment needed for a one-time build. It was time to reach out to my friend and AK guru Steve Palano.

Steve works with Barlow’s Custom Guns, but he has been building AK-style rifles for decades. He has built a couple of highly modified AK rifles for me in the past and they have been

excellent. He was contacted to facilitate proper riveting and installation of the barrel, both of which required some tools not available at my shop. He also added a small rail as well as polished and finished the wood furniture. Coating was completed by Red Creek Tactical. The result is one of the nicest AK rifles I have ever owned.

7.62 Overhaul

This build started with a virgin M92 parts kit in 7.62x39mm. The M92 uses a 10-inch barrel, a bit longer than a typical short barreled AK’s, which makes for better ballistics and accuracy, and they are very high quality. Barlow’s Custom Guns had an Elk River semi-automatic receiver suitable for the project in house, so I purchased it to complete the build.

Steve Palano located a standard rear trunnion and facilitated the rest of the riveting. He prepared one of his triggers, flattening and tuning it to be crisp and light. Steve’s AK triggers tend to be a bit light for me, so my specification was the same trigger with a bit more weight and a crisp reset. Steve also custom cut and fit a nice section of rail for the addition of a micro-dot sight. Lastly,

CUSTOM YUGO M92



**Short-barreled
7.62x39mm build delivers
classic AK lines and
outstanding reliability.**

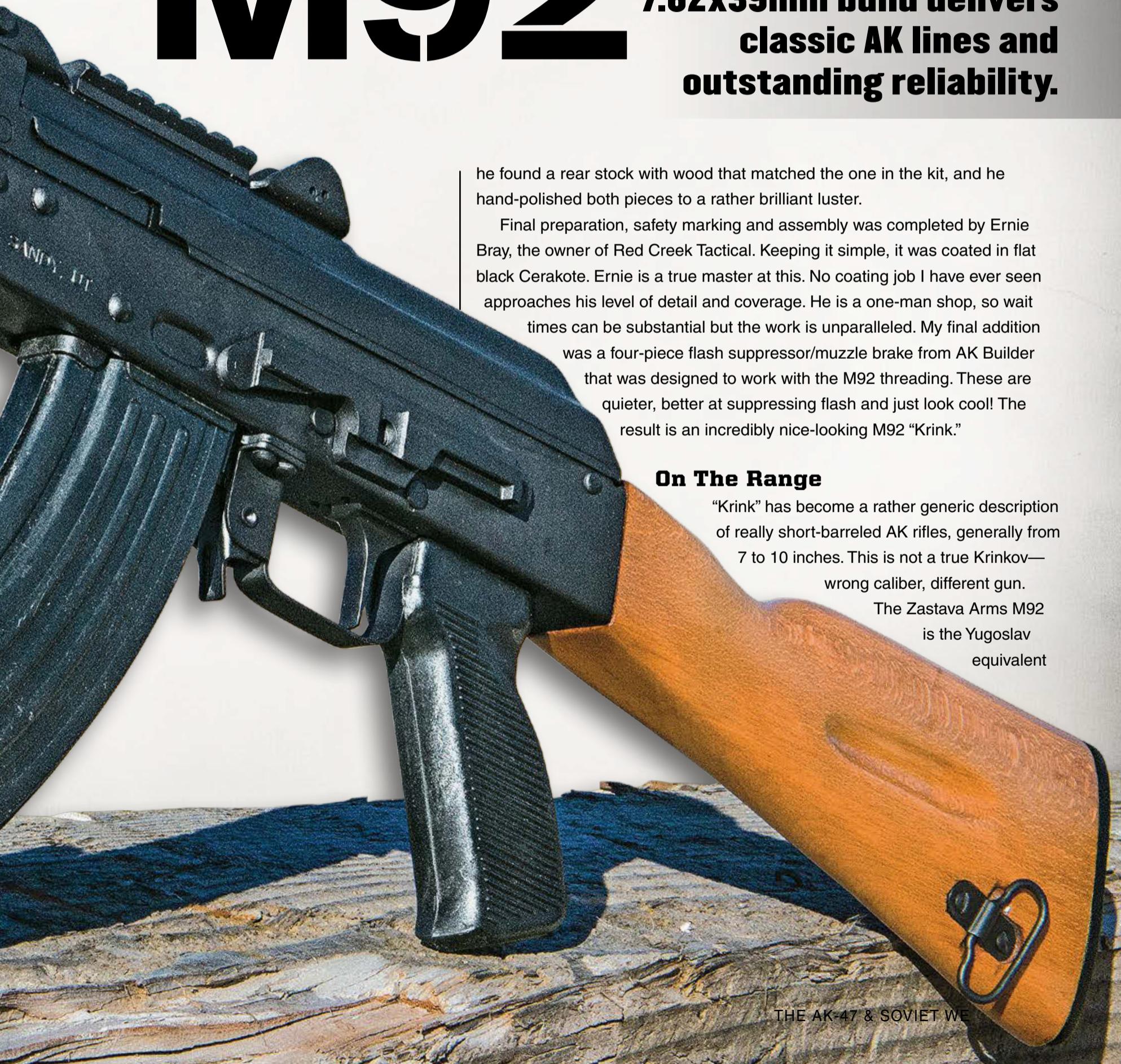
he found a rear stock with wood that matched the one in the kit, and he hand-polished both pieces to a rather brilliant luster.

Final preparation, safety marking and assembly was completed by Ernie Bray, the owner of Red Creek Tactical. Keeping it simple, it was coated in flat black Cerakote. Ernie is a true master at this. No coating job I have ever seen approaches his level of detail and coverage. He is a one-man shop, so wait times can be substantial but the work is unparalleled. My final addition was a four-piece flash suppressor/muzzle brake from AK Builder that was designed to work with the M92 threading. These are quieter, better at suppressing flash and just look cool! The result is an incredibly nice-looking M92 "Krink."

On The Range

"Krink" has become a rather generic description of really short-barreled AK rifles, generally from 7 to 10 inches. This is not a true Krinkov—wrong caliber, different gun.

The Zastava Arms M92 is the Yugoslav equivalent





This flash suppressor sends all the blast forward making for better control and a much more range-friendly rifle.



**“ AFTER
CLOSE TO
500 ROUNDS...
THE M92 CUT THE
CENTER OUT OF THE
TARGET. IT WAS
SMOOTH, FAST TO THE
SHOULDER AND POINTED
RIGHT IN ON TARGET. ”**

SPECIFICATIONS CUSTOM M92

CALIBER: 7.62x39mm
BARREL: 10 inches
OA LENGTH: 31 inches
WEIGHT: 6.7 pounds
SIGHTS: Fixed front, flip-up rear
STOCKS: Wood
ACTION: Semi-auto, gas-piston operated
FINISH: Black Cerakote
CAPACITY: 30+1
MSRP: \$2,000



that uses a longer barrel and is chambered in 7.62x39mm. My experience with these guns has been positive as they exhibit low recoil, solid accuracy and high reliability. Using a 10-inch barrel delivers slightly better ballistics and the gas system works really well. A longer handguard makes it more controllable and a great close-quarters rifle.

Accuracy with any AK is seldom stellar, as it was never designed to be a precision rifle. Proper assembly with good parts makes it better, but tiny little groups were not in the plan. To my surprise, this rifle was plenty accurate, especially with DoubleTap's 123-grain Rifle Defense load. My best group measured 2 inches at 100 yards. My M92 required significant effort to get it locked up on a rest when shooting from the bench, but it was plenty solid and remained attached to me, not the bench.

Leupold's DeltaPoint was used instead of the iron sights. Its triangle "dot" provides a sharp point for a bit more precision. A pretty soft-shooting load, the DoubleTap allowed for about as much precision as a 10-inch barrel is going to get. Hornady's A-MAX load grouped between 2.5 and 3 inches, and everything else was around 3 to 4 inches. Moving out to 200 and 300 yards using the DeltaPoint, hits on steel were pretty easy from prone. From a kneeling position at 200 yards, hits were regular. Tiring from off-hand at 100 yards, impacts were about eight out of 10, which isn't bad. Either way, the rifle was plenty accurate, and much of this can be attributed to Steve Palano's trigger. It is hands-down the best AK trigger I have ever used. Granted, he tuned it to my specs, but it was crisp with a clear and precise reset. The rifle's trigger pull weight is right around 4 pounds, making for predictable and consistent control. It only got better when distances moved back to reality.

Rifles with barrels this short, especially in this caliber, are really CQB guns, and this one shined up close. Factory sights included a flip-up front with a large white dot

covering the standard post. Flip up the rear sight to the larger notch and you see two rear dots. Designed for close work, there is little adjustment possible. It prompted me to remove the micro-dot sight and finish the testing with the irons.

These factory sights work really well at 25 yards and closer. Holding dead center, it impacted about 1.5 inches to the right at 25 yards. As distances closed and movement was added, this shift was all but forgotten.

After close to 500 rounds of Red Army Standard and Wolf Military Classic, the M92 cut the center out of the target. It was smooth, fast to the shoulder and pointed right in on target. My cheekweld indexed quickly in the same spot each time on the rather beautifully polished standard stock. Function was flawless with zero malfunctions. Most of the shooting was done using Polish metal magazines, although quite a bit was accomplished with Bulgarian polymer mags. The rifle was also tested using both U.S. Palm and TAPCO magazines, and all worked perfectly. I'm not sure I have had this much fun with an AK in a long time!

AK rifles have their issues, but reliability is seldom one of them. Having spent the last few months building, using and tuning AR rifles, it was a pleasure to just point this M92 downrange and press the trigger. Rather than checking ejection patterns for proper tuning, it flings brass into the next county. There's no worrying about buffer weights, springs, carrier weights and gas ports. Each rifle system has its strengths and weaknesses, but when it comes to simple reliability, the AK is hard to beat. It reminded my why this platform has been a worldwide favorite for such a long time.

Adding the four-piece AK Builder muzzle brake turned out to be a good idea, another recommendation from Steve Palano. It looks good and worked really well. This rifle was controllable and not all that loud as 10-inch-barrelled rifles go. With similar rifles, flame can be evident in broad daylight



Factory handguards were a beautiful blonde color, polished to perfection by Steve Palano.



A strip of Picatinny rail mounted forward of the rear sight allows for use of micro red-dot optics.



The safety has a modified cutout that can engage the charging handle and lock open the action.

during operation, but this one had no such issues. It may not be completely flash suppressed, but it is not a flamethrower. This brake added the usability and makes this M92 look very nice.

Parting Shots

Steve Palano did a fantastic job for his part on this build, which, honestly, is most of it—at least the important parts. His trigger is the best I have used, and his work on the wood parts was superb. You can tell Steve spent a good amount of time finishing the wood and the rail does not look like a cheap add-on. Not only was it straight, but it was mounted solidly and finished well. Everything lined up and it shot straight without any real adjustment to the sights. The action was smooth and functioned flawlessly. If you are looking for someone to perform a custom build, check with Barlow's Custom Guns and contact Steve Palano. You will not be disappointed in his work. His standard builds are available for pick-up in the store. The features will be different, but his attention to detail is still present.

My original intent was to sell this rifle, but that is not going to happen now. It was too much fun to shoot! It is going to stay pretty much as configured with the possible exception of a folding stock. Bonesteel Arms makes one of the best folders out there and it mounts up without hacking up my rear trunnion. After using one on my Vepr 12 for the last year, it has proven to be as solid as



Author fitted out the threaded muzzle with a new four-piece flash suppressor/muzzle brake unit.



a rock. Folded up, this M92 is quite the compact package, making stowage in the truck pretty easy. I'm not sure it will stay that way, but it will certainly get some testing time.

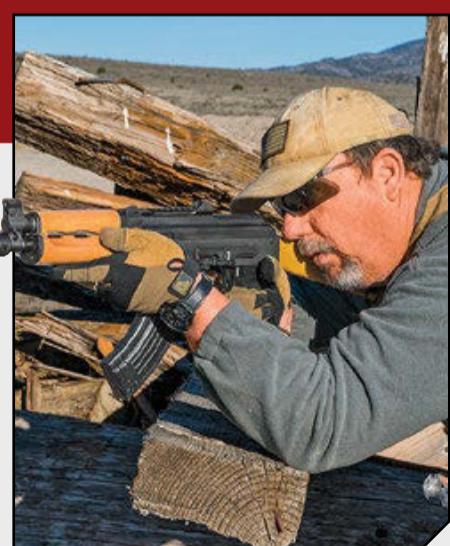
Most of my time is spent testing someone else's gun, so it was fun to get back to what started me on this path: shooting my rifles for fun. One of my favorite systems has always been the AK, and this M92 build only confirmed that fact. It was kind of like getting in touch with an old friend, but this one was just dressed a bit differently. Unlike many guns that pass through my hands, this one is going to stick around for years of enjoyment. For more information, call 801-973-4788 or visit barlowscustomguns.com. ★

“ ONE OF MY FAVORITE SYSTEMS HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE AK, AND THIS M92 BUILD ONLY CONFIRMED THAT FACT. ”

PERFORMANCE CUSTOM M92 7.62x39MM

Load	Velocity	Accuracy
DoubleTap 123 Rifle Defense	1,875	2.00
DoubleTap 123 TSX	1,950	2.50
Hornady 123 A-MAX	2,025	2.75
Red Army 123 FMJ	2,075	3.50
Wolf Military Classic 124 FMJ	2,050	3.70

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second (fps) by chronograph and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 100 yards.





ROUND-UP

OPTICS, SIGHTS & LASERS

BY ROBERT A. SADOWSKI

Target acquisition

is made easier with optics, and the AK design in recent years has become much more adaptable to mounting them and other aiming devices. Though the AK design debuted in 1947, it has gone through numerous design revisions and had a myriad of aftermarket adapters designed for it that have made it more suitable to mounting these products. These include side-mounted optic rails to top-mounted rails to forend-mounted systems, to name just a few. Consumers have many options these days when it comes to aiming devices for their AK, from surplus optics to high-tech lasers. Here's a look at some top optic options for AK enthusiasts.

AIMPOINT
MICRO T-2



CENTERPOINT
OPEN REFLEX



CRIMSON
TRACE
CMR-204

HI-LUX CMR-AK762





KASHTAN 1P78
TACTICAL
COMBAT SCOPE



STEINER XTR II
TACTICAL SCOPE



ATLANTIC FIREARMS PK-A

AIMPOINT MICRO T-2

The Micro T-2 red-dot sight is an updated and enhanced version of the original Aimpoint Micro model. It features a new sight housing that allows for the use of both front and rear flip-up lens covers and anti-reflective devices, beefed-up protection for the unit's adjustments turrets, and increased ruggedness for the internal electronic components. The T-2 uses one CR-2032 battery that will last for up to five years of constant-on use. (aimpoint.com; 877-246-7646)

PK-A FROM ATLANTIC FIREARMS

The PK-A red-dot rifle sight from Atlantic Firearms is compatible with the AK, Vepr, Saiga and SLR platforms. The PK-A is the current issue for Venezuela's military and has a special finish developed for humid climates. The sight uses AA batteries and has 1,000 working hours of battery life. The integrated adjustable AK side clamp mount has a low profile and centers the optic over the bore. The reticle is a bright, 1-MOA red dot with variable brightness controls, allowing an operator to adjust the brightness of the dot, including special brightness levels for use with night-vision equipment. (atlanticfirearms.com; 410-352-5183)

CRIMSON TRACE CMR-204

The CMR-204 Rail Master Pro Universal Green Laser Sight and Tactical Light from Crimson Trace provides users with a rail-mounted green laser/white light combination unit ready for any tactical role. Designed to fit on Picatinny or Weaver-style accessory rails, the CMR-204 is designed for use on long guns as well as handguns. The unit features multiple operational modes and has a rugged waterproof aluminum housing. It runs on a single CR2 lithium battery. (crimsontrace.com; 800-442-2406)

STEINER XTR II TACTICAL SCOPE

The Steiner 1-5x24mm XTR II tactical riflescope offers an illuminated reticle in two options—a Ballistic 5.56 Gen 3 or a CQ Mil—in either rear or dual focal planes. The XTR II is constructed from a tube that is 25 percent thicker than other scopes. There are 11 illumination settings with a “battery off” position between settings. Windage and elevation turrets feature “Zero Click Stop” adjustment knobs. (steiner-optics.com; 970-356-1670)

CENTERPOINT OPEN REFLEX

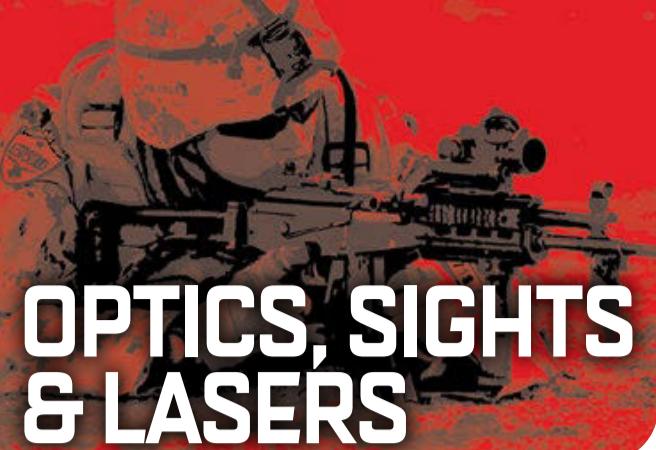
The Open Reflex Sight allows an operator to keep both eyes open while shooting for a complete field of view. Four different red or green reticle options are featured, each with adjustable brightness. The unit mounts to any Picatinny or Weaver-style rail. (centerpointhunting.com; 866-726-1122)

HI-LUX CMR-AK762

The 1-4x24mm CMR-AK762 was specifically designed to be compatible with the standard AK-47 service round, which uses a 122-grain bullet. The illuminated reticle is calibrated to the trajectory of the Soviet round with a circular center and dot and numerous marks for both elevation and windage. The bullet-drop-compensating lines offer aiming out to 1,000 meters. (hi-luxoptics.com; 888-445-8912)

KASHTAN 1P78 TACTICAL COMBAT SCOPE

Kalinka Optics imports new and surplus optics from Eastern Europe. The Kashtan 1P78 Tactical Combat Scope is the newest collimator scope for the AK used by Russia's elite forces. The scope features a solar-powered dual black/green German post-style reticle and is well suited for close- to medium-range shooting. The scope comes with a latch lever to attach the unit to the side of an AK. (kalinkaoptics.com; 910-454-8194)



OPTICS, SIGHTS & LASERS

STREAMLIGHT TLR-4 G



LASERLYTE SIGHT CM DUAL LENS

The CM (Center Mass) unit features two green laser patterns: single dot or center-mass pattern. The center-mass pattern projects a ring of eight green laser dots with one green laser dot in the center. Either laser pattern is visible in normal and low-light environments. It has a six-hour runtime on the constant-on setting with one CR-123 battery. (laserlyte.com; 928-649-3201)

LASERMAX UNI-IR

The LaserMax Uni-IR unit is the smallest and lightest IR (infrared) laser on the market, requiring only 1.75 inches of rail space on any Weaver or Picatinny-style rail. The unit operates on two 357 silver oxide batteries with a six-hour runtime. The unit also includes a rail so other accessories can be mounted on the Uni-IR. (lasermax.com; 800-527-3703)

MEOTAC 1-4X24MM RD

The 1-4x24mm RD riflescope offers true 1x usage with a zoom range up to 4x power magnification. The illuminated reticle K-5.56ZD red dot offers fast target acquisition with seven illumination settings to adjust for bright daylight to low-light conditions. Adjustment turrets offer .05 Mil Rad per click. The fast-focus eyepiece allows an operator to rapidly bring a target into sharp focus. (meoptasportsoptics.com; 800-828-8928)

TRUGLO TRITON



STREAMLIGHT TLR-4 G

The TLR-4 G from Streamlight combines a 115-lumen LED tactical light with a 510-530nm direct drive green laser. The three-position mode switch allows operators to run the unit with LED only, LED and laser or laser only. Depending on the mode selected, runtime is 1.25 to four hours. Constructed of impact-resistant polymer, the TLR-4 G offers quick, one-hand mounting to most Picatinny and Weaver-style rails. (streamlight.com; 800-523-7488)

TEXAS WEAPON SYSTEMS AK PEEP SIGHT

The Peep Sight from Texas Weapon Systems is mounted on the rear of the company's Dog Leg Rail and nearly doubles the sight radius of an AK rifle. The aperture diameter is 0.07 inches and is made of 6061-T6 aluminum with a hardcoat black anodized finish. It weighs about 0.5 ounces. When used with a micro-dot sight, a lower co-witness is typically used with the peep sight. (texasweaponsystems.com; 512-554-1136)

TRUGLO TRITON

The Triton 20mm Tri-Color red-dot sight from TruGlo features a 5-MOA dot reticle in three reticle colors (red, green or blue) so the reticle will contrast against any background. The one-piece unit is compact and lightweight and features an integrated Weaver-style mounting clamp. The Triton is powered by one CR2032 battery. (truglo.com; 888-887-8456)

VIRIDIAN X5L-RS

The X5L-RS by Viridian features a rotary selector dial offering multiple white light and green laser modes. The light pushes out 178 lumens continuously, 224 lumens on strobe, and the green laser is visible to 100 yards in daylight and up to 2 miles at night. The unit is completely adjustable and runs on one CR-123 battery. A two-button pressure pad operates the unit. Constructed of 6061 aircraft-grade aluminum, it weighs slightly over 3 ounces with the battery installed. (viridiangreenlaser.com; 800-990-9390)

MEOTAC 1-4X24MM RD



TEXAS WEAPON SYSTEMS AK PEEP SIGHT



LASERLYTE SIGHT CM DUAL LENS

LASERMAX UNI-IR



VIRIDIAN X5L-RS



“**CONSUMERS
HAVE MANY
OPTIONS THESE
DAYS WHEN
IT COMES TO
MOUNTING
OPTICS ON
AN AK...**”



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BIRTH OF THE AK



The Kalashnikov rifle's path from concept to worldwide military icon.

BY MAXIM POPENKER



The *Avtomat Kalashnikova* assault rifle, generally known as the AK, was born out of the harsh experiences of World War II, in which the Soviet Union fought against invading Nazi Germany and its allies and subordinates.

By the start of the war in 1941, the Soviet Army was armed with bolt-action 1891/30 Mosin-Nagant rifles, which were gradually replaced by semi-automatic Tokarev SVT-40 rifles that fired the same 7.62x54R ammunition. This ammunition was more or less equal in terms of power and range with other contemporary rifle cartridges, such as the British .303, the U.S. .30-06 or the German 7.92x57mm. Also, as a result of recent experiences of the Winter War, fought from 1939 through 1940 against Finland, submachine guns were hastily introduced as secondary



Close-up view of the Tokarev experimental assault rifle of 1945.

armaments for Soviet infantry forces. These submachine guns, the Degtyaryov PPD-40 and the subsequent Shpagin PPSH41, fired 7.62x25mm ammunition, which was light and cheap but also had a limited effective range (about 200 to 250 meters).

Neither class of weapons was entirely satisfactory. Bolt-action rifles, while extremely robust and cheap to make, were slow-firing, excessively

long and badly suited for urban or forest warfare, as well as for mechanized transport. Semi-automatic rifles offered noticeable improvements in firepower, but they also were expensive, required regular maintenance and were generally picky about the quality of ammunition. Submachine guns, while handy and inexpensive, lacked accuracy and penetration. It was clear that some kind of new weapon

was required if not to finish the ongoing war, then to arm the Soviet Army to guard the fruits of its inevitable victory.

Born From Battle

The actual story of the Soviet assault rifle began in 1942, during the hardest part of WWII. Two events took place during that year. First, a young, wounded tanker, Sergeant Mikhail Kalashnikov, began to design his first small arm (a submachine gun) while on medical leave. Second, during the winter of 1942, the Soviet Army captured the first specimen of the newest German weapon, the machine carbine Mkb.42 (H) and its 7.92x33mm Kurz ammunition. These trophies were carefully examined, and proved to Soviet experts that it was entirely possible to improve both the range and accuracy of shoulder-fired automatic weapons while retaining the weight and size of the typical PPSH41 submachine gun. The Soviet Army immediately requested the development of an intermediate cartridge in 7.62mm caliber, leading designers Semin and Elizarov to develop such ammunition by the end of 1943. It had a bottlenecked case that was 41mm long and fired a pointed, jacketed bullet weighing 8 grams (the case was shortened to 39mm in 1947, with the introduction of the steel-cored, boattailed bullet).



A very early production AK-47, as it was adopted in 1949.



Prototype AK-47 assault rifle with folding stock, 1947.



Classic Soviet propaganda photo from the late 1940s, showing a young Sergeant Kalashnikov (pointing toward board) with officers of the Ministry of Armed Forces of the USSR.



“AMONG THE ENTRANTS TO THE 1946 TEST TRIALS WAS THE FIRST KALASHNIKOV ASSAULT RIFLE, GENERALLY KNOWN AS THE AK-46.”

With the new cartridge handy, Soviet designers began to work on automatic rifles. First was Sudayev (designer of the highly successful PPS43 submachine gun), who developed his first assault rifle, known as the AS-44, by early 1944. This was a gas-operated, locked-breech

design with a tilting locking bolt that was submitted for trials by mid-1944. The Army then ordered a small batch of AS-44 rifles with an appropriate amount of ammunition for extended field trials, and received it in 1945. Unfortunately, Sudayev's severe illness and untimely death in mid-1946 (he was just 33 when died) terminated the development of the AS-44.

Trial By Fire

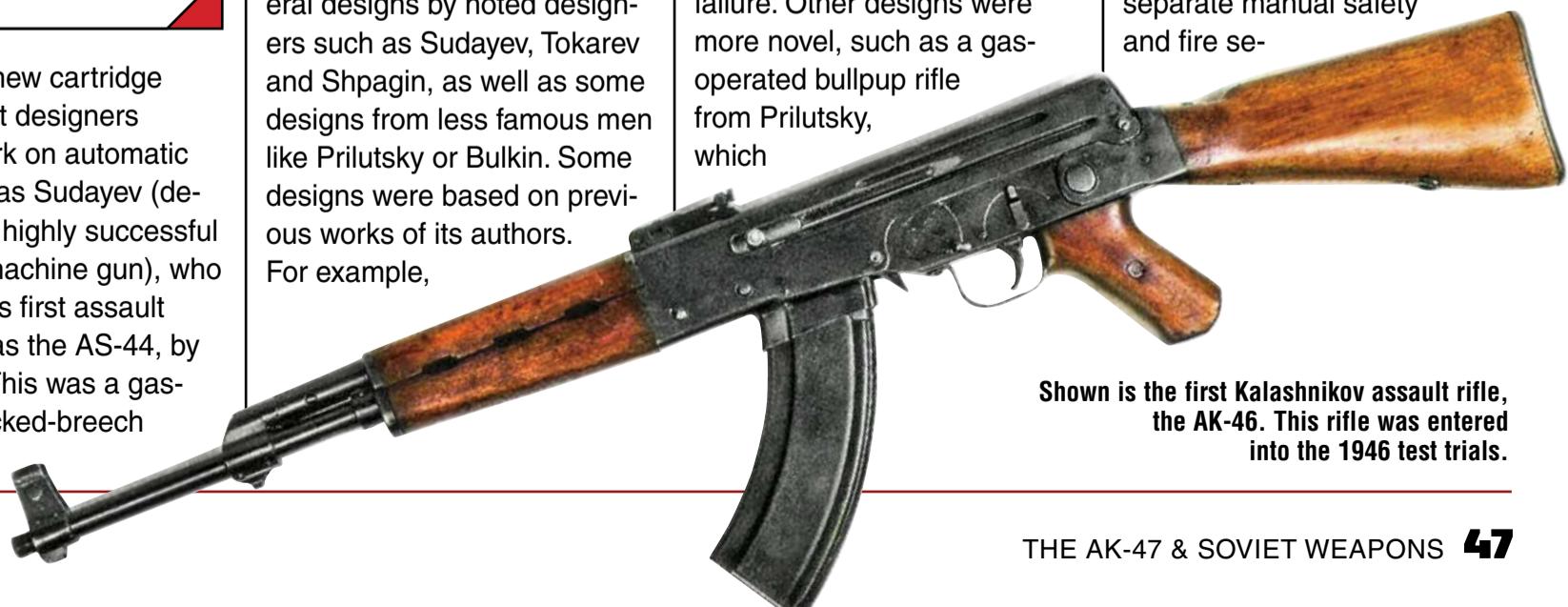
The first round of trials, held in 1945, consisted of several designs by noted designers such as Sudayev, Tokarev and Shpargin, as well as some designs from less famous men like Prilutsky or Bulkin. Some designs were based on previous works of its authors. For example,

Tokarev assault rifles, which were based on their namesake's self-loading rifle, were scaled down for a smaller cartridge and adapted to selective fire. Another "legacy" design was the Shpargin assault rifle, which, most surprisingly, was more or less a PPSh41 submachine gun stretched out for 7.62x41mm (M43) ammunition. It used the same open bolt and a simple blowback action with a heavy bolt weighing over 2.6 pounds.

Not surprisingly, the Shpargin rifle was a complete failure. Other designs were more novel, such as a gas-operated bullpup rifle from Prilutsky,

used a gas-operated action with a tilting locking bolt. Neither weapon performed satisfactorily, however. As a result, the next round of trials was scheduled for 1946.

Among the entrants to the 1946 test trials was the first Kalashnikov assault rifle, generally known as the AK-46. It was a gas-operated, select-fire weapon with a locking rotary bolt inspired by the M1 Garand rifle. The AK-46 featured a short-stroke gas piston above the barrel, a two-piece machined steel receiver and separate manual safety and fire se-



Shown is the first Kalashnikov assault rifle, the AK-46. This rifle was entered into the 1946 test trials.



lector levers. AK-46 prototypes were assembled at the Kovrov factory N.2, currently known as ZID or the “Degtaryov plant.”

Other contenders that were permitted to participate in the 1946 trials included the AR-46 rifle by Rukavishnikov, the TKB-408 rifle by Korobov, the AB-46 rifle by Bulkin and the AD-46 rifle by Dementiev. By far the most unorthodox was the TKB-408, which was built in a compact bullpup layout. The trial’s results were inconclusive: No weapon was able to perform satisfactorily in all tests, and two designs were initially suggested for further development: Bulkin’s and Dementiev’s.

Despite the initial failure, Kalashnikov was able to talk certain members of the trials commission into reevaluating their test results, and the commission eventually allowed him to continue his development for the next round of trials.

Redesign

With official approval for further development, Kalashnikov returned to Kovrov and commenced an extensive redesign process. With the help of experienced small arms designer Aelksandr Zaytsev, he changed the receiver design, replaced the short-stroke, separate gas piston with the now familiar long-stroke piston

integral with bolt carrier, and he also replaced the separate safety switch and fire selector with a single lever, inspired by the Browning-designed Remington Model 8 rifle.

In pursuit of meeting weight requirements, Kalashnikov also dared to cut the barrel shorter than it was originally required, to 16.3 inches, from the specified 20-inch requirement. This was a serious violation of the formal written requirements, but apparently the actual loss of muzzle velocity was negligible. The benefits of the shorter barrel included better handling and a slight decrease in manufacturing costs, so the trials commission let it slip in the end.

It must be noted that some “new” features of the 1947 Kalashnikov prototype were borrowed from competing designs, or ones that were suggested by Proving Ground personnel. This was common practice in the Soviet Union, where all intellectual property belonged to “the people,” or, actually, to the state, rather than to the inventor. Therefore,

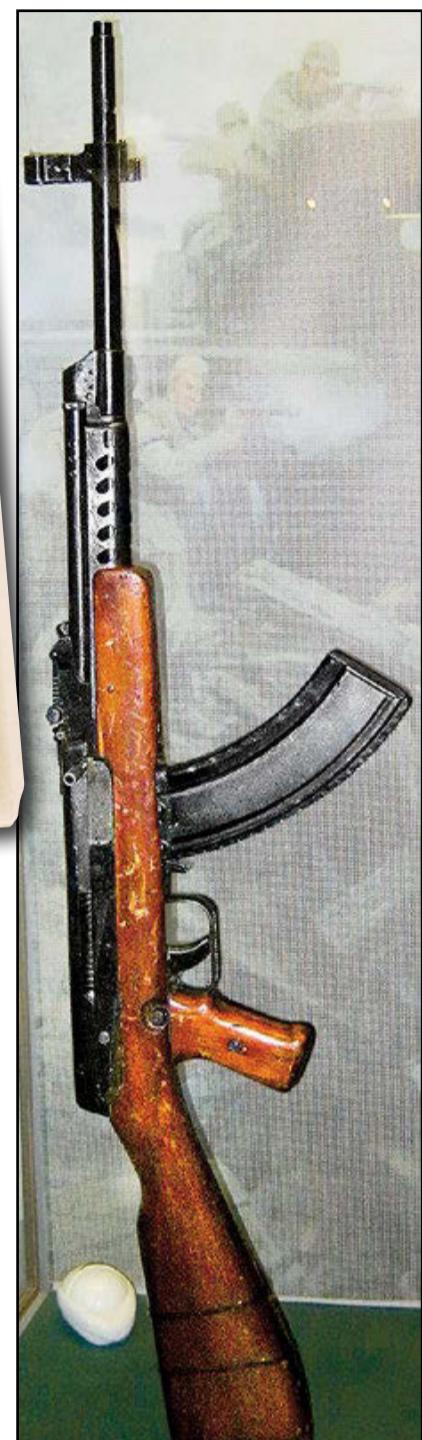


Above & right: First Soviet Union assault rifle, Sudayev As-44, in contemporary documentation and in museum exhibition.

all inventions were free to use by everyone as long as they were put to the benefit of the state, and the development of a new infantry rifle was obviously considered quite beneficial to the homeland.

Final Testing

During the trials, none of designs performed entirely up to military requirements, with the Bulkin design proving most accurate and Kalashnikov being the most rugged and reliable. After lengthy



discussion, the trials commission decided that a reliable weapon with “passable” accuracy, available right now, was better than a reliable and accurate rifle available next year, or next decade, and decided to recommend the AK-47 for trial batch production, with suggestions for further improvements. The trials commission issued a final document on January 10th, 1948, stating that the Kalashnikov design was recommended for limited manufacture and field trials, and that its two rivals had failed the trials.

It must be noted that the designation “AK-47” was of-



One of more unusual early experimental Soviet assault rifles tested in 1946-47 was this TKB-408 rifle by Korobov.



Bulkin AB-46 assault rifle, which competed with the AK-47 but lost due to reliability issues.

ficially used only during trials and first one or two years of limited production. Since around 1950 rifle was designated simply as an AK.

The next step was to make a batch of rifles for these field trials. Despite the fact that early AK prototypes were made at Plant #2 in the city of Kovrov, near Moscow, another plant was allocated for batch manufacture. It was plant #524, located deep in the heart of Russia (and far from watchful eyes of foreign

intelligence services), in the city of Izhevsk.

By June of 1947, the initial batch of AK rifles was delivered to the Soviet Army, and distributed to several different units located throughout the Soviet Union, primarily around Moscow and Leningrad and in central Asia. As a result of extensive field trials conducted in a variety of climates and tactical scenarios, the AK was officially approved as a new standard arm for the Soviet Army in 1949.

Mass manufacture of the AK was ordered to plant #74, which is known today as "Izhevsk Machine-building plant" or "Izhmash" in short. As it turned out, existing machinery and technologies of the plant were not sufficient to manufacture new weapons with the necessary quality and precision. During the first two years of AK production, the amount of rejected rifles was too excessive, and by late 1950, it became obvious that a major redesign was re-

quired to improve production quality and output.

A group of factory engineers had to develop a machined steel receiver instead of the original stamped steel receiver. This step was technologically backward, but in reality it greatly reduced the amount of receivers that were being rejected at the factory. Machined receiver AK and AKS designs, which entered production in 1951, retained the same designations as the original, stamped steel AK and AKS models of 1949. These would become the first mass-produced versions of the now famous Kalashnikov AK assault rifles, which were produced until the late 1950s in the Soviet Union and are still made elsewhere in the world today. ★

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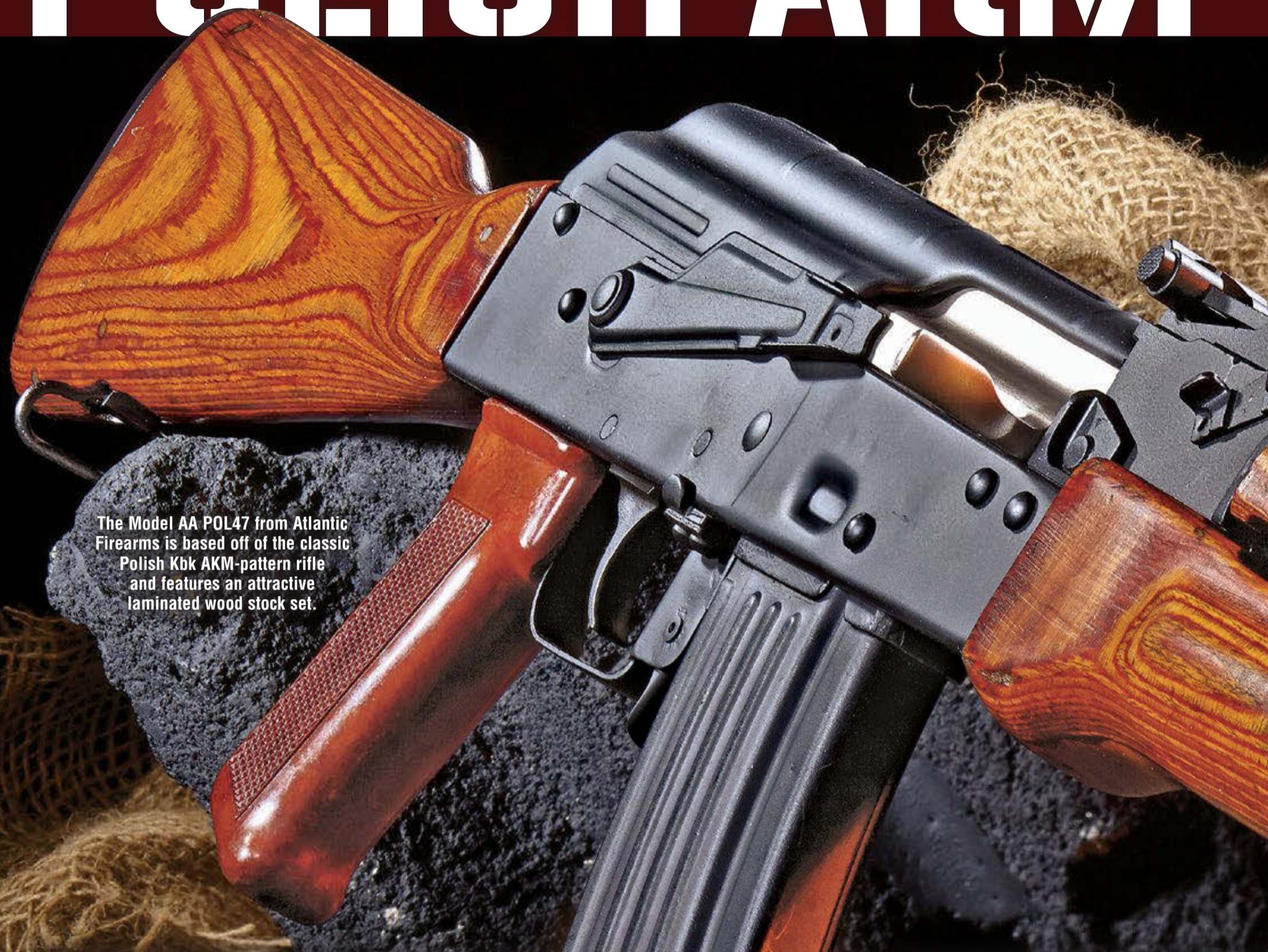
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POLISH ARMS



The Model AA POL47 from Atlantic Firearms is based off of the classic Polish Kbk AKM-pattern rifle and features an attractive laminated wood stock set.

While many people logically consider Moscow the spiritual birthplace and home of the AK rifle, a new domestic source for this classic weapon system has sprung up near our own center of political gravity, Washington, D.C.

Based in Bishopville, Maryland, that company is Atlantic Firearms, and it offers a broad range of AK-based firearms (as well as many other weapon types).

As compared to a more traditional "brick and mortar" retailer, Atlantic Firearms

represents a newer take on manufacturing and marketing firearms. "We do not have a 'storefront' as you would know it," said Atlantic Firearms' Blaine Bunting during a recent conversation. "We started out basically as a group of shooters that were into military collectibles like AKs, ARs, M1 Garands, etc. But we became really frustrated with the lack of these offered in local stores. So, a little over a decade ago, we decided to start our own internet-based business," he continued.

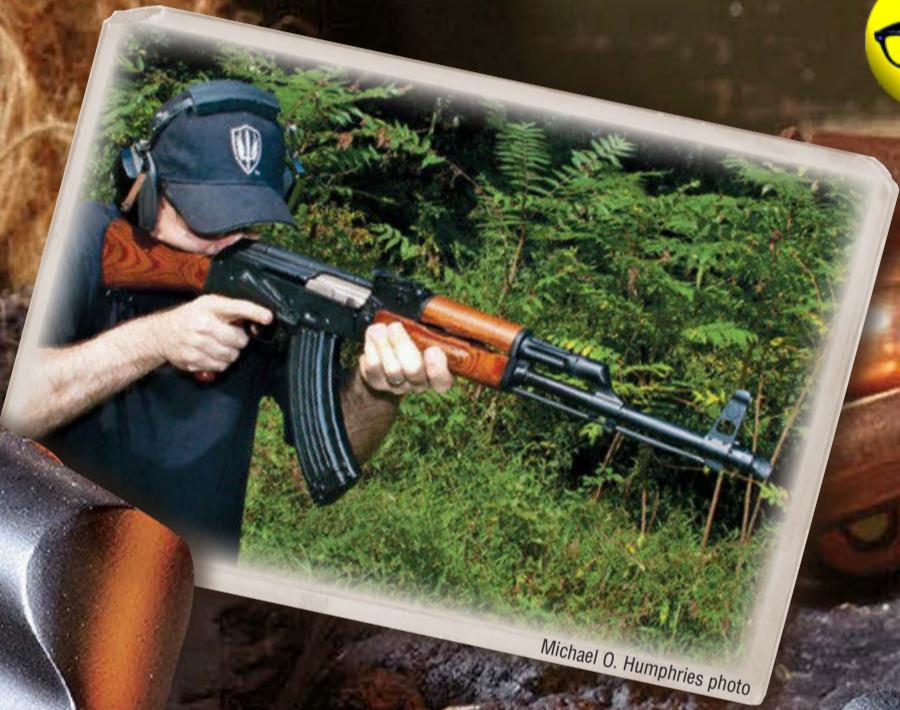
After several years of retailing variants of these types of firearms to good success, Atlantic

7.62x39mm



Atlantic Firearms' classically styled Kalashnikov!

BY MICHAEL O. HUMPHRIES
PHOTOS BY STEVE WOODS



Michael O. Humphries photo

Firearms made a bold move and decided to start offering its own line of firearms (with some produced "in house" as well as others built for the company under contract). "The business really took off for us at that point," Bunting said.

While perusing the Atlantic Firearms' website to familiarize myself with its offerings, a particular AK-pattern rifle caught my eye. As a bit of a traditionalist in temperament when it comes to AKs, I was immediately drawn to the Model AA POL47. An AKM-pattern rifle,

The AKM features a classic-style slanted muzzle brake and the tower adjustable front sight.



The AA POL47 rifle features a sliding tangent rear sight unit marked out to 1,000 meters, with attractive white highlighting.



The bolt carrier assembly features a satin nickel finish to provide lubricity, ease of cleaning and notable visual flair.



“THE RIFLE THAT I RECEIVED WAS EXTREMELY IMPRESSIVE, FROM ITS EVENLY APPLIED FINISH TO THE BEAUTIFUL LAMINATED STOCK SET.”



The heart of the AA POL47 is a stamped sheet steel receiver that is properly heat treated and in spec. Note the ribbed top cover.



The left side of the receiver sports an AKM-style side mounted optical rail to allow users to mount the optic of their choice.

it is based off of the Polish KbK series of AKM-pattern 7.62x39mm weapons. This classically styled AK was produced by the famed Polish armsmaker *Fabryka Broni Lucznik*, known more commonly to us as “Radom.” Adopted in the 1960s as an upgrade to its earlier milled-receiver Kalashnikov-pattern rifles, the KbK AKM was part of the Warsaw Pact’s movement toward standardization of the new Soviet AKM-pattern rifle. It was initially produced with hard-wood stocks, later switching to the more familiar AKM-style laminated wood. And with the Atlantic Arms AA POL47, we have a domestically available semi-automatic remake of this classic Polish military weapon.

Signature Series

The AA POL47 is described on the company’s website as being an Atlantic Firearms model built from a surplus Polish KbK AKM parts kit. This is combined with the requisite Section 922(r) parts for legality.

I discussed this rifle with Bunting and was able to get some interesting information about it. “That rifle is part of what we call our ‘Signature Series,’ which is made up of guns that are either built in house or contracted out with builders for us. They are exclusive to us.” This Polish rifle turned out to be one of

the guns the company produces itself, under a separate manufacturing wing of the firm called Atlantic Arms MFG. This section is made up of three builders who produce relatively small quantities of guns for these projects. “We are looking to build a limited number of guns correctly. This is a ‘quality over quantity’ approach for us,” Bunting explained.

Bunting went on to tell me that this particular rifle is a build the company does to appeal to traditionalists looking for an original-style AK, but at a good price. The base of the build is the KbK Polish AKM parts kit. Bunting told me that the company works closely with overseas buyers to source the best-quality kits that can be found.

Combined with the kit are the following 922(r)-compliant U.S.-made parts: receiver, barrel, trigger, hammer, disconnector and slant brake. The receiver on the current batch of rifles is a McKay Enterprises unit, but Bunting told me that the company may use other makes as well. “Everything we use is fully in spec and heat treated, or we will not use it.” The three-part fire control group and the slant brake are all TAPCO gear.

The 16-inch barrel of the rifle is a chrome-lined unit manufactured from 4140 steel and features a 1-in-10-inch rate of twist. Bunting told me that while the com-

SPECIFICATIONS

ATLANTIC FIREARMS POLISH AKM

CALIBER: 7.62x39mm

BARREL: 16 inches

OA LENGTH: 35.25 inches

WEIGHT: 8 pounds

STOCK: Laminated wood

SIGHTS: Winged post front, sliding tangent rear

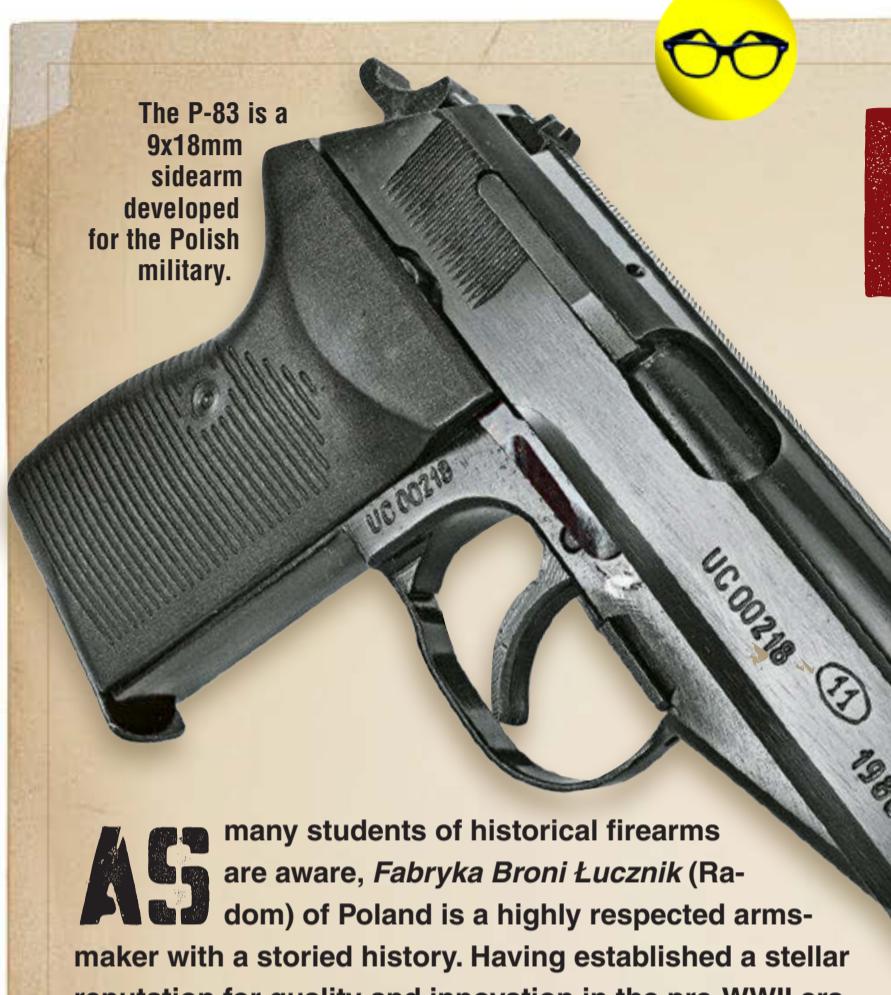
ACTION: Long-stroke piston, semi-auto

FINISH: Teflon

CAPACITY: 30+1

MSRP: \$839





The P-83 is a 9x18mm sidearm developed for the Polish military.



POLISH P-83 WANAD

As many students of historical firearms are aware, *Fabryka Broni Łucznik* (Radom) of Poland is a highly respected arms-maker with a storied history. Having established a stellar reputation for quality and innovation in the pre-WWII era, Radom continued this tradition well into the Cold War era—albeit with a new focus on Soviet-style weaponry due to the nation falling under the sphere of Eastern influence. As a result of this situation, the earliest weapons developed by Radom during this period hewed very closely to their Russian siblings. Good examples of this are Poland's 7.62x39mm Kalashnikov series of rifles as well as its domestic variant of the Tokarev TT-33 7.62x25mm pistol.

However, as the decades of the Cold War ground on, Poland began to show more and more independence in its domestic weapons designs. When Poland looked to transition away from the Tokarev pistol and into a new 9x18mm sidearm similar to the Russian Makarov, the country developed its own design. What resulted was the new double-action/single-action P-64, designed at the WITU (Military Ordnance Materiel Institute) and manufactured from 1966 to 1977. While very successful, it also proved to be very expensive to produce.

The P-83 features a slide catch lever and slide-mounted safety (left), fixed military-style sights (center) and a heel-mounted magazine catch (right).

As a result, in the 1970s, Radom set about developing a replacement pistol design that would be cheaper and easier to manufacture. The result was the "Wanad" pistol, chambered for the standard 9x18mm cartridge and adopted in 1984 as the "9mm pistolet wz.1983", or simply P-83. Designed by M. Gryszkiewicz, the pistol made use of sheet metal and spot welding in its construction. Featuring similar lines and dimensions to the P-64, the 8+1 capacity pistol featured a hammer-drop safety mounted on the slide and a heel-mounted magazine release. Where it differed most notably from the P-64 was that it featured a slide catch/release lever.

Recently, numbers of both P-64 and (to a lesser extent) P-83 pistols have been appearing on the surplus market at very reasonable prices. I recently picked up an excellent condition P-83 with matching numbers from Southern Ohio Gun. As with all surplus guns, if you would like one, I highly recommend that you pick up one now before they are all gone. For more information, visit southernohiogun.com or call 800-944-4867. — *By Michael O. Humphries*

THE AK-47 & SOVIET WEAPONS 53



POLISH AKM 7.62x39MM



Photo courtesy gunart.net



**“IT WAS...QUITE
CONSISTENT IN THE
ACCURACY DEPARTMENT,
WITH ALL THREE LOADS
HOVERING AROUND
THE 3-INCH MARK AT
100 YARDS.”**

The buttstock of the rifle is made of attractive laminated wood for durability and strength.

pany chose a chrome-lined unit for this rifle because it is more “traditional” and helps keep the rifle at a lower price point, they are also offering rifles with nitride-treated barrels, which are becoming very popular in the AK community.

The finish of the gun is where the rifle deviates a bit more from the original. The metal parts are given a manganese phosphate finish that is then coated over with a satin black Teflon top finish. As part of the “Signature Series” treatment, the bolt carrier assembly is given a satin nickel coating to both add some visual flair as well as to make it easier to keep clean. To further enhance the rifle’s appearance, key markings on the rifle are given a white highlighting treatment where possible.

Bunting also described the build process behind the guns to me. “AKs can often have a problem of being out of proper alignment,” he said. “With many, you can find canted sight towers and gas blocks. When we finish a build, we then inspect them and laser bore sight them to make sure everything is straight. Then we put 30 to 60 rounds through the rifle to make sure everything is good on it,” Bunting said. He also explained that many manufacturers will simply put two or three rounds through a gun and be done with it. “We spend a little more time and money on the front end to make sure we weed out any problems then and there. We want to make sure we get the best possible product



The handguards of the AA POL47 features the familiar AKM-style bulge/palm swell.

to our customer,” he noted. The rifle comes with a one-year warranty to back all this up.

Hands On

As we concluded our conversation, I put in an order for a test sample rifle and waited for the opportunity to try it out for myself. A few days later, a box from Atlantic Firearms showed up at my local gun shop and I hurriedly went to pick it up. The rifle that I received was extremely impressive, from its evenly applied finish to the beautiful laminated stock set. The white lettering was a nice touch, as evidenced by the 1,000-meter markings on the sliding tangent rear sight unit. It came in a hard plastic case with a surprisingly thorough owner’s manual and one 30-round magazine. I also noted that it is equipped with a side rail for mounting optics.

I took the rifle home and inspected it before packing it up with a selection of Arsenal, Federal and Red Army ammunition and heading out to the range. The gun ran without a hitch, cycling reliably with all three loads. It was also quite consistent in the accuracy department, with all three loads hovering around the 3- to 3.5-inch mark at 100 yards (while showing a slight preference for the Federal loading). In fact, for an iron-sighted AK at 100 yards, these groupings are quite impressive. After I had concluded my accuracy testing, I decided to burn up some leftover ammunition to test it for function. I ran another 200 or so rounds through the rifle, doing double and triple taps, etc. As during the accuracy-testing phase, the Polish rifle ran without a hitch.

For those looking for a traditionally styled AKM-pattern rifle with top-quality components and a solid build—all at a reasonable price point by the standards of AK pricing these days—the AA POL47 Polish AKM from Atlantic Firearms is an outstanding choice. If you are interested, be sure to visit the company’s website and see about not only this rifle, but also the many other products the company carries. For more information, visit atlanticfirearms.com or call 410-352-5183.

PERFORMANCE

ATLANTIC FIREARMS POLISH AKM 7.62x39MM

Load	Velocity	Accuracy
Arsenal 122 FMJ	2,312	3.30
Federal Fusion 123 JSP	2,298	2.85
Red Army 123 FMJ	2,333	3.50

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second by chronograph and accuracy in inches for best 5-shot groups at 100 yards.



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AK Side Rail Scope Mount #MI-AKSM Retail \$119.95



MI Universal AK-47/AK-74 Handguard

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US Patent D625,765S

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- ◆ Made in the U.S.A., includes lifetime warranty

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With Optic Specific Topcover Retail \$134.95
With Aimpoint ML2 Topcover Retail \$154.95



US Patent D625,765S

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- ◆ Installs in minutes, no gunsmithing required
- ◆ High quality T-marked MIL-STD 1913 rails
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With Optic Specific Topcover Retail \$169.95
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AIRAK AK-74 5.45MM



This Bulgarian-sourced AK-74 rifle offers time-tested design and amazing performance!

BY DAVID BAHDE • PHOTOS BY SEAN UTLEY

Ior several years, my preference in a carbine has been an AK-based system.

Their simplicity and reliability have always appealed to me. Using them early on, their ergonomics were a bit problematic, but over the years that has become an easy fix. Firearms remain tools for me, with alteration dictated by the task at hand. Purists tend to scoff when an AK is altered, but I find this odd

since most won't hesitate to put every gadget known to man on an AR. The bottom line for me is, if it makes it work better, feel better or shoot better, then it should be changed.

While this generally works great for me, and has for years, my consistent and frequent attendance at shooting schools has presented an issue or two. Given how my current AKs are configured, participation in any carbine school is fine; in fact, out-shooting AR rifles with an AK is always fun. Where it



Bulgarian-based AK-74 rifles are one of the best options for American consumers looking to acquire a 5.45x39mm rifle. The ARAK AK-74 combines U.S. and Bulgarian parts to provide a top-notch product.



The highly advanced AK-74-pattern muzzle brake of the ARAK rifle significantly reduces perceived recoil and muzzle climb.



A semi-auto only, U.S.-made receiver serves as the basis for the ARAK AK-74 rifle in 5.45x39mm.



Installing a Krebs Custom safety allows for easy one-handed operation while allowing you to lock the bolt to the rear.

“ MY CUSTOM AKs ARE NICE, BUT THIS THING IS REALLY LIGHT AND HANDY. FROM 50 YARDS AND IN, IT WAS AS CLOSE AS AN AK-74 GETS TO BEING A TACK DRIVER. ”

SPECIFICATIONS ARAK AK-74

CALIBER: 5.45x39mm
BARREL: 16.5 inches
OA LENGTH: 36.1 inches
WEIGHT: 6.8 pounds
STOCK: Polymer
SIGHTS: Tritium front/Krebs rear
ACTION: Semi-auto
FINISH: KG Gun Kote (matte black)
CAPACITY: 30+1
PRICE: \$800



presents an issue, however, is in some of the beginning schools specifically geared toward the AK platform. Often designed to familiarize a soldier preparing to deploy or an enthusiast new to the system, these courses revolve around standard guns. While many will alter their rifles, just as many do not. Collectors want them as designed, and many shooters like to keep them simple. As a participant of these classes, there are no real issues. As an evaluator, however, it can be problematic since left-side charging handles, altered safeties and magazine releases can completely change an AK's normal operation. This prompted my need for a relatively unaltered AK for just this purpose.

Newfound Popularity

When first introduced to the AK-74, I all but ignored it. The ballistics of the 7.62x39mm were the primary reason for my preference. It just seemed like an AK-47 with a little bullet—a round closer to the 5.56mm. Given time, and some urging from my friend Steve Palano, I purchased one and tested it in earnest. That was all it took to win me over. With a lighter weight and little to no recoil, it was a joy to shoot. Accuracy with even military surplus am-

munition was significantly better than with most any AK-47. Ammunition was generally more available and less expensive. Hornady's introduction of the V-Max bullet made it even better. Finally, it allowed me to attend high-round-count carbine schools for less money. Taken in total, it made the AK-74 my first choice for a school gun.

For most of the AK's history in America it was seen as a cheap alternative to the AR. Early imports under \$300 made that an easy assumption. Since then, however, import restrictions on the weapon and its parts have changed that perception completely. High demand has driven prices up. Higher prices present issues for sure, but it has also sparked a burgeoning market—AK rifles built here in the U.S. The result is in an entirely different level of rifles. While less expensive imports make it through on occasion, they are pretty rare. Those rifles that were \$300 are now closer to \$700. Rifles built to a better standard are closer to \$1,000. Purists that want primarily Russian parts will pay \$1,500 or more, with some close to \$3,000. Sitting in the middle are custom builds using high-quality imported parts along with American barrels, receivers and assorted parts.

★★★★★



Correct AK-74 furniture provides the user with an easy to access cleaning kit door with a ribbed steel buttplate.

With prices hovering under \$1,000, that was my first choice. My search ended with an AK-74 built by ARAK Guns.

Gun Details

ARAK Guns is a small shop in Tennessee specializing in AK-74 rifles built on Bulgarian parts kits. While they sell some other AK parts, when I contacted them they were only building AK-74 rifles using mostly unissued parts. Built on an American-made



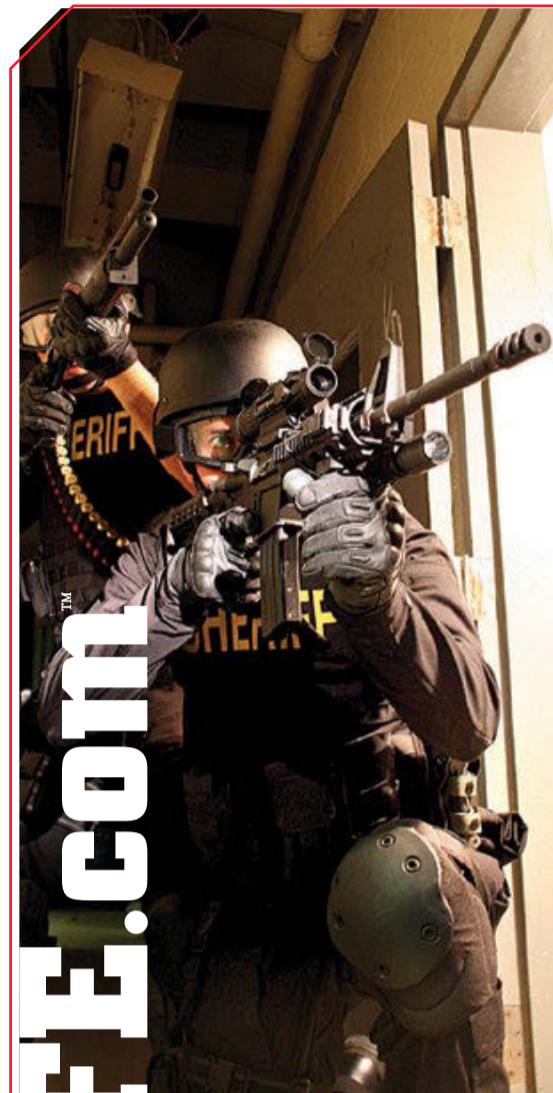
The ARAK AK-74 features the now-common 90-degree gas block found on most modern Kalashnikov-series rifles.



The 5.45x39mm (left) shares a similar overall length to its older sibling, the 7.62x39mm (right).

Waffen Werks AK-74 receiver, they also use chrome-lined, U.S.-made barrels.

My gun was ordered from RRC Firearms (rrcfirearms.com) and arrived promptly. Arriving in a Plano hard case, the quality of fit and finish was quickly evident. Ordered with plum polymer furniture, it is one of the cleanest looking AKs I had seen in a long time. Coated in KG Gun Kote, it was clean, smooth and evenly coated throughout. The high-quality Waffen Werks receiver is



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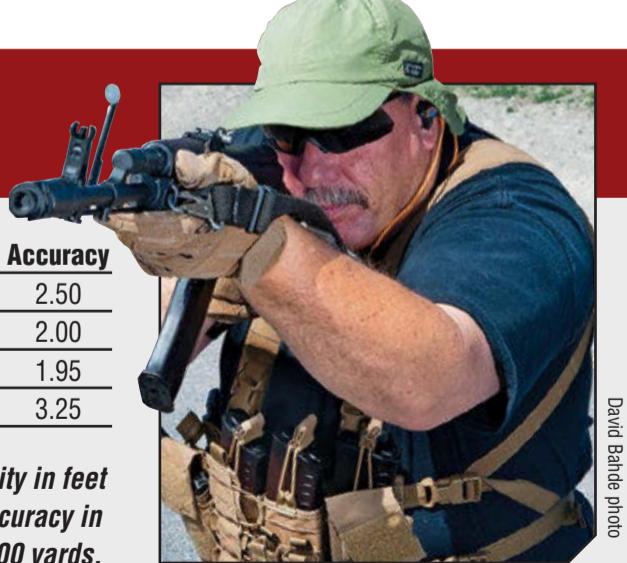


PERFORMANCE

ARAK AK-74 5.45x39MM

Load	Velocity	Accuracy
Barnaul 60 FMJ	2,874	2.50
Hornady V-Max Steel 60	2,810	2.00
Romanian Surplus 70 FMJ	2,838	1.95
Russian Surplus 52 FMJ	3,007	3.25

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second (fps) by chronograph and accuracy in inches for three, 5-round groups from 100 yards.



David Bahde photo

★★★★★



The simple AK-74-style scope mount allows for easy attachment of a variety of red dots and scopes.



Unlike with earlier 7.62x39mm guns, most AK-74 rifle magazines are composite bodied.



The AK-74 grip is comfortable to use and angled properly to provide for the appropriate trigger manipulation.



Upgrading sights to a tritium front and ghost ring rear allows for use in failing and low light.

a great starting point and included a side scope rail. Coupled with the barrel, a Tapco G2 fire control group and a U.S.-made pistol grip, it is completely 922(r) compliant. A surplus, 30-round, black magazine was included. After examining it more closely, the front sight was straight and the overall fit and finish were excellent. Running the bolt in it was as smooth as a non-custom AK can get!

For testing, I only applied a couple of additions. Having grown accustomed to its presence on other AKs, I added a Krebs safety. Not only does it make it possible to lock the bolt open on the range, I think it is more intuitive and safer to run. Given my AK-74's primary task as a school gun, this addition just makes things easier. Standard sights are fine for most, but at my age they are about invisible. A Krebs fixed ghost ring rear sight and a tritium-equipped dot front sight were installed. This allows me to shoot the rifle accurately with no alteration to an instructor's iron sight training doctrine. One of my many Blue Force Vickers slings was equipped with a front clip and installed. Four plum-colored surplus magazines were also picked up to round out the package.

Range Testing

Just to keep it fair, group testing was accomplished using an Aimpoint T-1 attached to an RS Products AKML scope mount. This mount was borrowed for testing, but it was light, fast and allowed for co-witnessing. I'll be ordering one soon for myself. The best results came from the Romanian surplus 70 grain with a group measuring 1.95 inches. Everything else was under 3.5 inches.

These are results commensurate with a standard rifle and exhibit accuracy you might expect from military surplus ammo. Removing the sight, the ARAK AK-74 remained pretty accurate. Hits on 6-inch rifle steel at 100 yards were pretty regular and easy. With a solid hold and trigger squeeze, misses were rare. Even at 200 and 300 yards, hits were regular on a silhouette-sized target. While not quite as accurate as my custom rifle, it was pretty close. Sighting with the Krebs rear and tritium front works well for me, even at longer distances. For those of us unable to pick up that tiny post and blade, these are a fantastic choice.

This rifle never missed a beat against close-range targets. It ran smooth throughout the test with no failures to feed or malfunctions. The magazine provided with the rifle, several plum military surplus polymer units, and my Polish Tantal metal magazines were used. None had any issues inserting, feeding, or breaking free from the action.

My custom AKs are nice, but this thing is really light and handy. From 50 yards and in, it was as close as an AK-74 gets to being a tack driver. Whether I was on the move or in position, all of my shots stayed inside an 8-inch circle. Given zero malfunctions over several hundred rounds, this gun ran like an AK should. The forend did get hot, as one might expect, but nothing came loose, allowing the ARAK AK-74 to run hot, dirty, and eat everything it was fed.

After spending a day with a stock pistol grip, I've decided to further customize that feature. It won't really alter any training dynamic, but it will allow for better control

and more comfort. My hands are big, and standard grips on these guns are just too small for me. Moving into the shoot house this became evident quickly. Still, it was very handy in the house. Krebs' ghost ring rear sight allows you to get on the sights as quickly as just about any iron sight. For typical distances and CQB (close-quarters battle) it is about perfect. It is loud, however, which is the norm for these brakes. They work great at controlling muzzle rise and recoil, but make sure you double up on hearing protection when indoors.

Smooth Shooter

The ARAK AK-74 has proven to be a popular rifle, a fact that's easy to see based on how quickly they sell out. ARAK Guns has done a great job at a decent price. The fit and finish of its AK-74 is head and shoulders above anything but a custom rifle, rivaling similar rifles at \$1,500. The bolt group was smooth, the trigger predictable and the gun ran everything thrown at it. It came apart and cleaned easily, and the Gun Kote coating holds up much better than the typical finish. It will be perfectly suited to any future AK class, or for use testing standard parts and accessories.

If you are in the market for an AK-74, make sure you give ARAK a close look. They make a solid product at a fair price, all of it backed up by a one-year warranty and excellent customer service. I'm not sure it gets any better than that, no matter what gun you're talking about. For more information on ARAK Guns, visit arakguns.com or call 865-257-1040.

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• Weighs 74 lbs.

LOT NO. 68048

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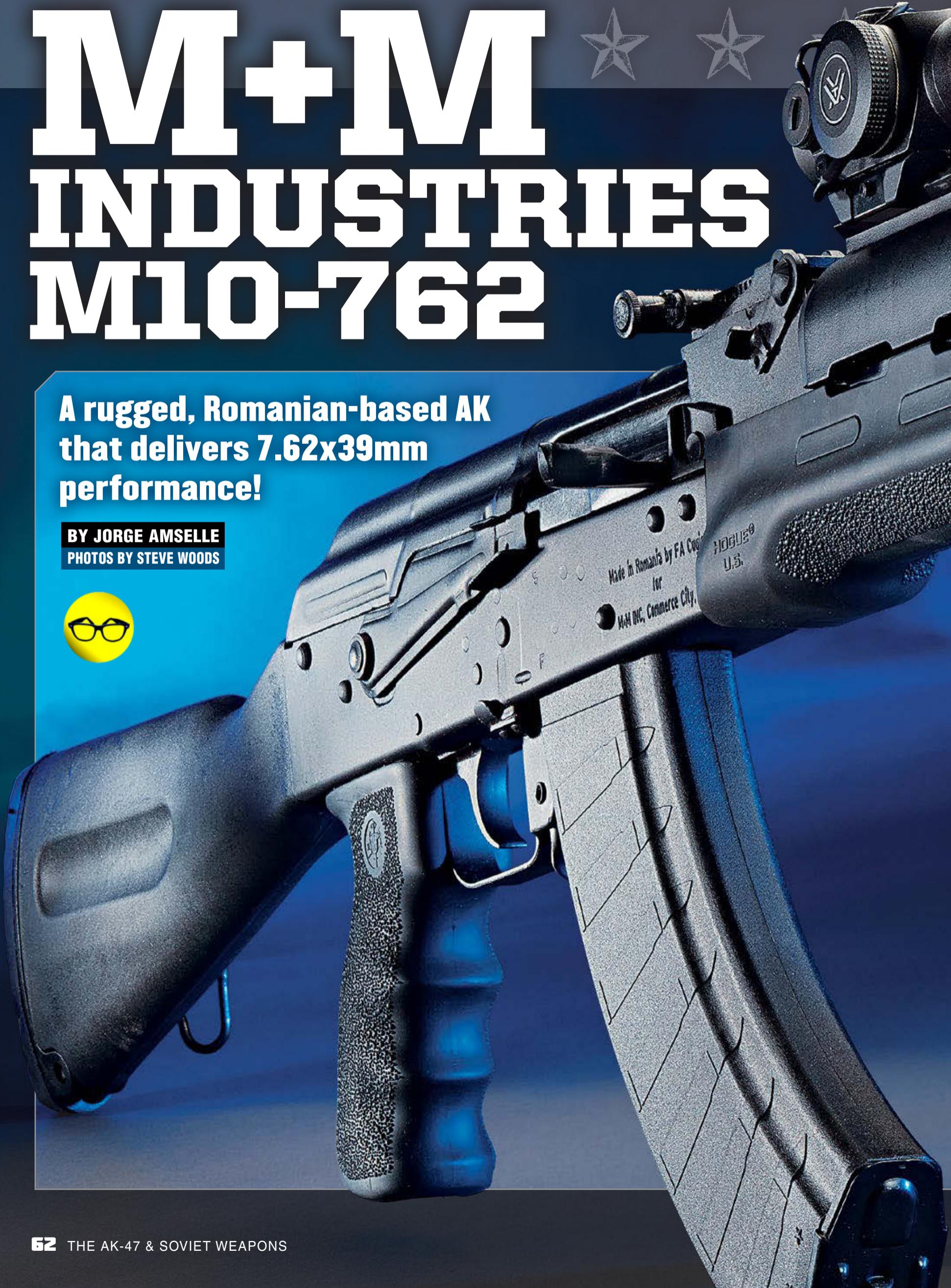
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M+M INDUSTRIES MLO-762

A rugged, Romanian-based AK
that delivers 7.62x39mm
performance!

BY JORGE AMSELLE
PHOTOS BY STEVE WOODS





Some of the most prolific and popular AK rifles available here in the United States are those based on Romanian-produced rifles.

This should come as no surprise as they combine reasonable cost with rock-solid performance. In recent years, M+M Industries has been importing Romanian AKs with a rather distinct flavor. The M+M M10-762 is most certainly not your standard AKM-style rifle, but rather a much improved variant that is feature-laden and much more well-heeled to fit the tastes of American consumers.

Modern Upgrades

The M10-762 is a 7.62x39mm-chambered, semi-automatic AKM-style built exclusively for M+M entirely from new parts, not de-milled military surplus. It is made in the AKM ("M" for modernized) pattern with a fully heat-treated, stamped steel receiver. The 16.25-inch barrel is cold hammer forged and chrome lined for improved reliability and corrosion resistance and has a lightweight profile. Cold hammer forging is a process in which a steel blank is hammered around a mandrel, creating the lands and grooves as well as the chamber of the barrel and producing longer life and improved accuracy.

The M+M M10-762 comes standard with advanced features to improve its ergonomics and user comfort including buttstock storage space, integral top handguard optics rail and an effective flash suppressor. Shown with Vortex SPARC II red dot sight.

The M10-762 gas block features the distinct 90-degree angle of the AK-74 instead of the older, 45-degree angle slant of traditional AK-47/AKM rifles. When the Soviets switched from the 7.62x39mm cartridge to the smaller-diameter 5.45x39mm round, the size and angle of the gas port in the barrel reportedly caused some incidences of bullet shear with the new, fast-moving projectiles. To help prevent bullet shearing, the 90-degree gas block presented a smaller opening to resolve this issue.

The barrel of the M10-762 is topped off with M+M's Chaos muzzle brake, which features four open-ended, 0.5-inch-long angled tines, which act as an effective flash suppressor. Behind the tines are eight staggered ports that act as a recoil-mitigating brake by directing gasses backwards.

Like all AK-pattern rifles, the M10-762 uses a long-stroke gas piston system of operation. The gasses bleed from the barrel directly impact a long, chrome-plated steel piston that is permanently affixed to the bolt carrier and charging handle. This mates with the rotating bolt, which features two locking lugs at its forward portion. When firing, the operating rod, charging handle and unlocked bolt move back as a single unit, improving the rifle's reliability in field conditions.



The Chaos muzzle brake features four angled tines for flash suppression and eight staggered ports behind them that act as a recoil-mitigating brake directing gasses backwards.



The M10-762's gas block (at left) features a modern 90-degree angle. Note integral Picatinny rail in the upper handguard (above).



The M10-762 has a handy side-mounted optics rail located on the lower left side of the stamped steel receiver.

This is nevertheless a lot of mass slaming back and forth, which can increase perceived recoil and shift point of aim, affecting accuracy. Indeed, AKs are not generally admired for their accuracy, although they are capable of achieving very good results in this regard in some cases. The positive effect of this system on reliability is undeniable however, and this is one of the AK's key strengths. The fixed charging handle does reciprocate when firing so some attention needs to be paid

to weapon position, but it also makes a very effective forward assist and helps greatly if you need to remove a stuck round. The whole unit resides under a proper AKM-style ribbed steel receiver cover.

Optimized Design

The sights on the M10-762 are also very distinctive. The elevation-adjustable front sight is actually part of and located at the top of the gas block. It appears very similar to the front sight/gas block assembly the Romanians use on the ultra-short PM md. 90 series of weapons. This arrangement gives the protruding barrel the appearance of an even thinner profile. Unfortunately, it also shortens the sight radius between the front and rear sights to only 11 inches. The tangent rear sight is in the RPK style and is notable in that it is adjustable for windage. This is accomplished by using a knob on the right that must be pulled to be turned. (As some context, the RPK was designed as the Soviet version of a Squad Automatic Weapon and was basically a beefed-up AK with a longer barrel and larger magazine. Since it was theoretically designed for a longer range and greater area of fire, windage adjustments built into the rear sight were deemed necessary.) The use of this style rear sight prevents any unintentional windage adjustment once your sights are established. The ranging adjustments are typically optimistic for an AK and range from 100 to 1,000 meters.

On the left side of the receiver there is a now-standard ComBloc quick-detach steel scope mount rail. This mount requires the use of a specialized mount to place the optic over the top of the receiver. Mercifully,

SPECIFICATIONS

M+M INDUSTRIES M10-762

CALIBER: 7.62x39mm

BARREL: 16.25 inches

OA LENGTH: 36.25 inches

WEIGHT: 7 pounds

STOCK: Phoenix Technology Survival

SIGHTS: Iron

ACTION: Semi-auto

FINISH: Parkerized

CAPACITY: 30+1

MSRP: \$817



Standard AK controls functioned effectively and are designed for right-handed shooters, except for the ambidextrous magazine release.

the M10-762 comes standard with either a quad-rail forend/handguard or, in my case, the Hogue rubber overmolded forend with removable rails. The Hogue package includes both a standard polymer AK top handguard cover and one with built-in Picatinny rails. This makes mounting a forward optic such as a red dot much easier.

The pistol grip is also a Hogue rubber overmolded grip with a pebbled texture and finger grooves. It is large, hand-filling, very comfortable and ergonomic. It also features M+M's distinctive heraldic logo on both sides. There is a storage space for batteries or small parts at the bottom of the grip, but one would need to find an appropriately sized plug.

The stock has a 13-inch length of pull, which should be comfortable for most people and is not uncommon for an AK, which typically have very short stocks. The black polymer stock is made by Phoenix Technology and represents a significant improvement over your standard mil-spec AK stock. There is a 0.5-inch, soft rubber recoil pad that helps to soak up recoil and keeps the gun firmly on the shoulder. The pad is also hinged and can be easily opened, revealing substantial internal storage space for a cleaning kit or other accessories. It also features a left-side-mounted sling swivel.

Controls are all standard for an AK with a right-side-mounted safety lever that features "S" and "F" markings for "safe" and "fire." The lever was just a bit stiff, but functioned well and has overtravel stops. The standard paddle-style, ambidextrous magazine release was stiff, as it should be, and small like most of them are.

I found the fit and finish in the M10-762 to be fairly good with an evenly applied



The Hogue overmolded handguard has an effective heat shield and palm swell with excellent texturing for comfort.

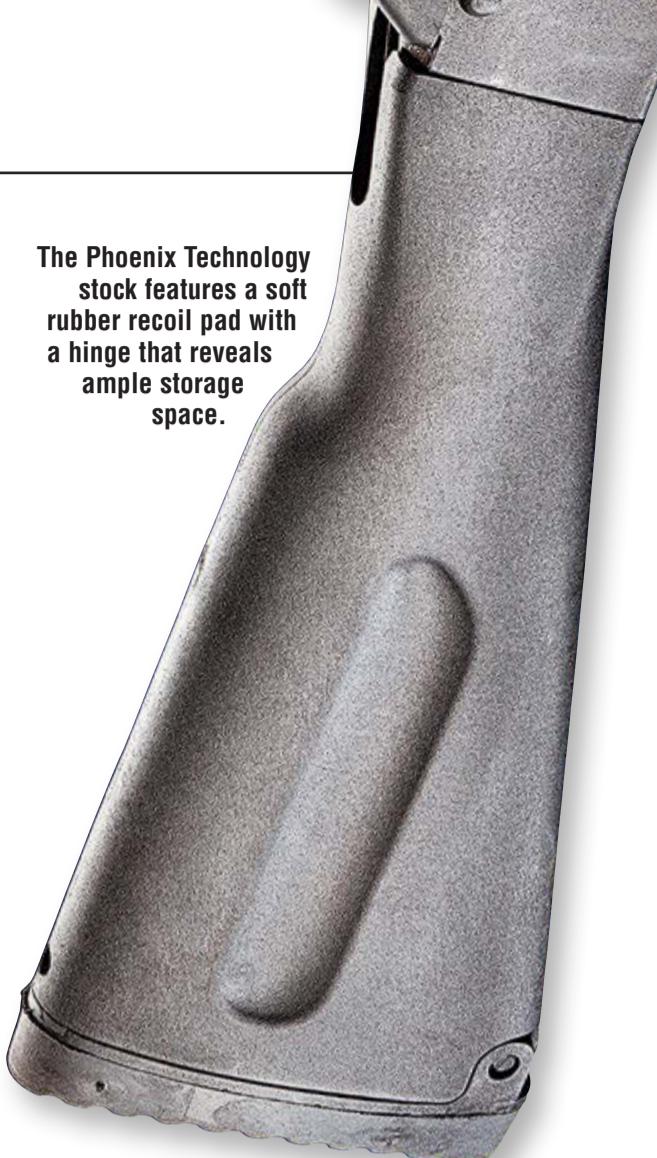
matte-black Parkerizing. Tolerances on AKs are typically loose, but the M10-762 was very solidly built with no rattle anywhere. All M10-762s receive their final assembly in the U.S., as required, and are 922(r) compliant with the requisite number of U.S. parts.

On The Range

On every AK I have tested, the triggers are all U.S.-made to comply with import restrictions. It is also here where I encounter the most problems. It seems that a disproportionate number of U.S.-made AK trigger groups are just slightly out of spec. In my experience, they generally function fine, although you get the occasional trigger slap where the trigger bounces forward painfully against your finger. Where I encounter real problems is in firing AKs from a sturdy benchrest, which I do to test accuracy.

The trigger on the M10-762 was crisp and light at just under 4 pounds and exhibited no trigger slap, but it did have a sear

The Phoenix Technology stock features a soft rubber recoil pad with a hinge that reveals ample storage space.



" THE RIFLE IS LIGHT AND HANDY, AND ITS EFFECTIVE MUZZLE BRAKE KEPT THE SIGHT ON TARGET FOR FASTER FOLLOW-UP SHOTS. "

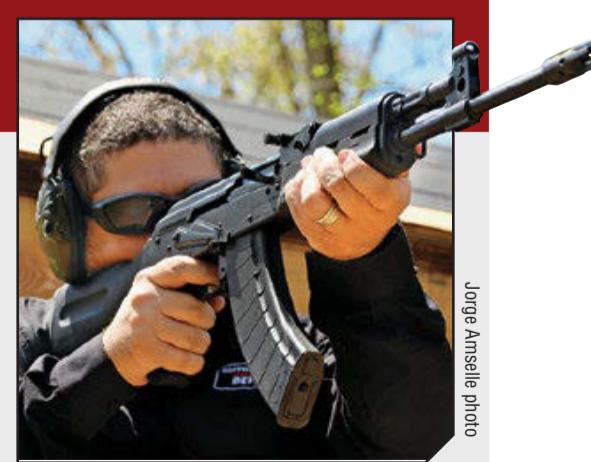


PERFORMANCE

M+M INDUSTRIES M10-762 7.62MM

Load	Velocity	Accuracy
Hornady 123 SST	2,191	3.10
Red Army 125 FMJ	2,347	2.90
Winchester 123 FM	2,252	3.04

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by a chronograph, and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 100 yards.



Jorge Amselle photo



GUNTEC STOCK & RAIL

Upgrade your AK with these cutting-edge accessories!

For those looking to take their AK into the 21st century, GunTecUSA has some accessories that might be right up your alley. For those who like the reliability of the AK but prefer ergonomics and adaptability more in

line with the AR, the GunTec AK-47/AK-74 Six-Position Predator Stock is ideal.

Offered with the company's alloy stock tube and Gen2 stock adapter system that employs an AR buffer tube (included), the stock delivers lightweight and rock-solid stability with a variable length of pull.

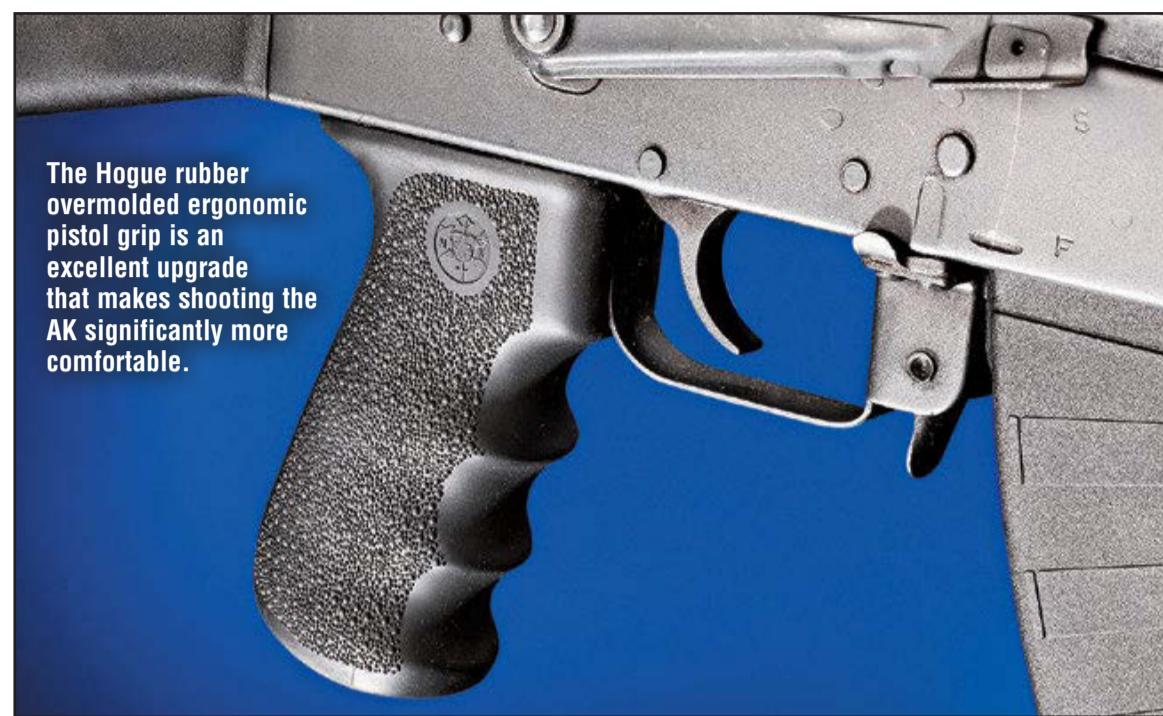
For those who want to be able to hang more gear off their AK, then the GunTecUSA AK-47/AK-74 Two-Piece Quad Rail deserves a close look. Manufactured from lightweight T6 aluminum, the AK forend is a drop-in unit that provides four strips of integrated



Picatinny rail for accessories (including and extended top rail), while also allowing the see-through use of iron sights. The rail is anodized in black or Cerakoted in OD Green or Flat Dark Earth. For more information, visit guntecusa.com or call 480-478-4517.

— By Michael O. Humphries

The Hogue rubber overmolded ergonomic pistol grip is an excellent upgrade that makes shooting the AK significantly more comfortable.



disconnect issue when firing from the bench. Again, this only happened off a benchrest and it should be noted that no one buys an AK to use as a benchrest gun; still, the trigger should work always, regardless.

I returned the rifle to M+M, and much to its credit the customer service was superb. The company very quickly returned the rifle with a comprehensive diagnostic enclosed that made clear that it was able to replicate the issue, identify the problem ("disconnector catch face is eight degrees too wide") and replace the trigger group. Even the handwriting was neat. The issue was much improved and I could complete my test and evaluation.

On the range the M10-762 was a pleasure to shoot and I encountered no malfunctions firing off-hand. The rifle is light and handy, and its effective muzzle brake kept the sight on target for faster follow-up shots. I mounted an EOTech holographic sight on the handguard's Picatinny rail, which sped up target-to-target transitions and also helped increase accuracy. My only concerns were that I did not feel that this mount was sturdy enough to hold zero and there may have been some shift during my shooting session. Also, the EOTech sight is designed for AR-height sights and the AK



The front sight post is protected by a rugged hood (top). Note the fact that the RPK-style rear sight assembly is adjustable for windage (above).

sights sit far lower so I could not co-witness or get a comfortable cheekweld.

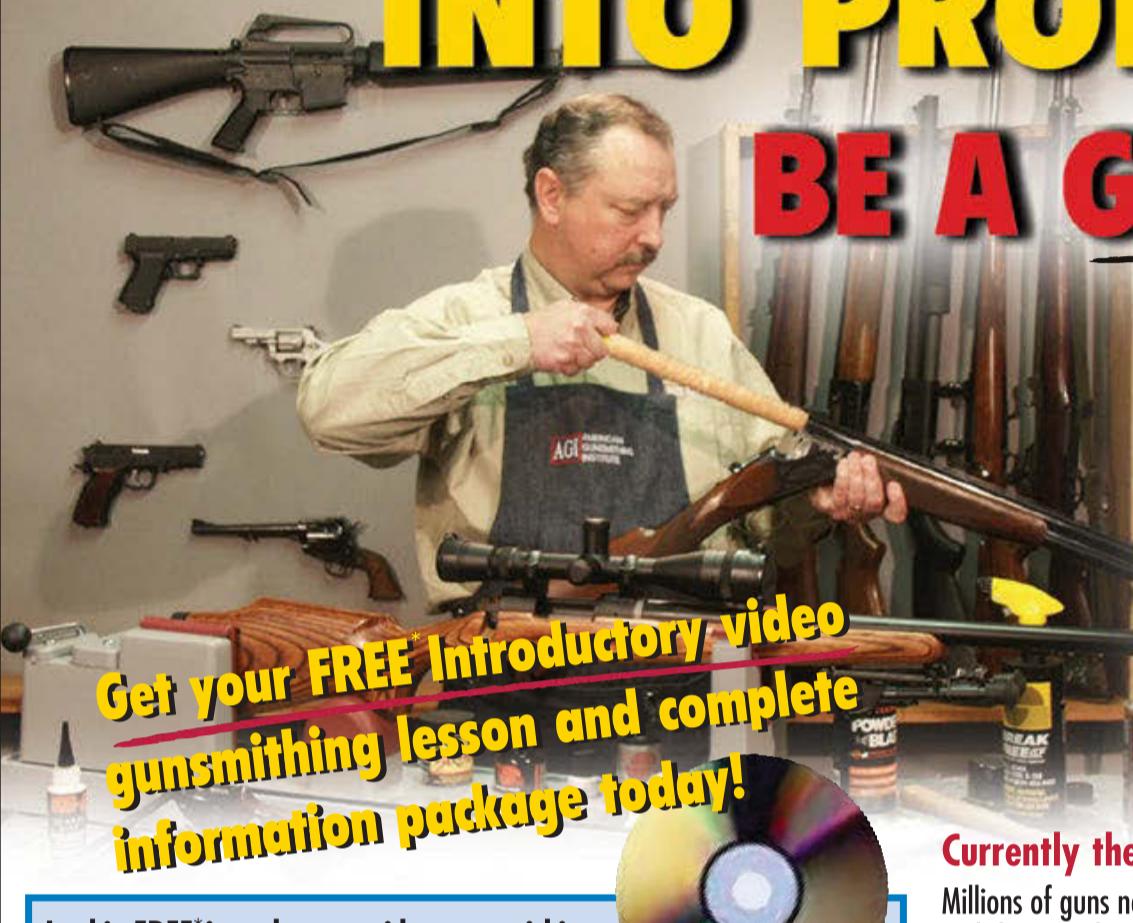
Accuracy from a stable benchrest at 100 yards was what I consider normal for an AK, at three to four MOA. One might be able to do better with a proper scope mount and a magnified optic. My best group was achieved using Red Army ammunition, which Century Arms is importing from Ukraine. It performed very well against name brand U.S. commercial ammunition, attesting to a higher standard of manufacture than one usually expects from inexpensive imported ammunition. Indeed, I have had good results using Red Army ammunition in the past as well.

I was also duly impressed with the many extras included in the well-packed cardboard shipping box. The M10-762 was firmly and securely placed in a molded plastic clamshell for shipping, and this neatly contained a 30-round magazine,

an owner's manual and all the extra accessory rails and spare top handguard cover that are part of the Hogue handguard kit.

Anyone seeking a reliable, economical, lightweight, solidly built AK variant with an eye toward enhanced ergonomics and extra features should certainly consider the M+M Industries M10-762. To learn more, visit mm-industries.com or call 866-926-5419. ★

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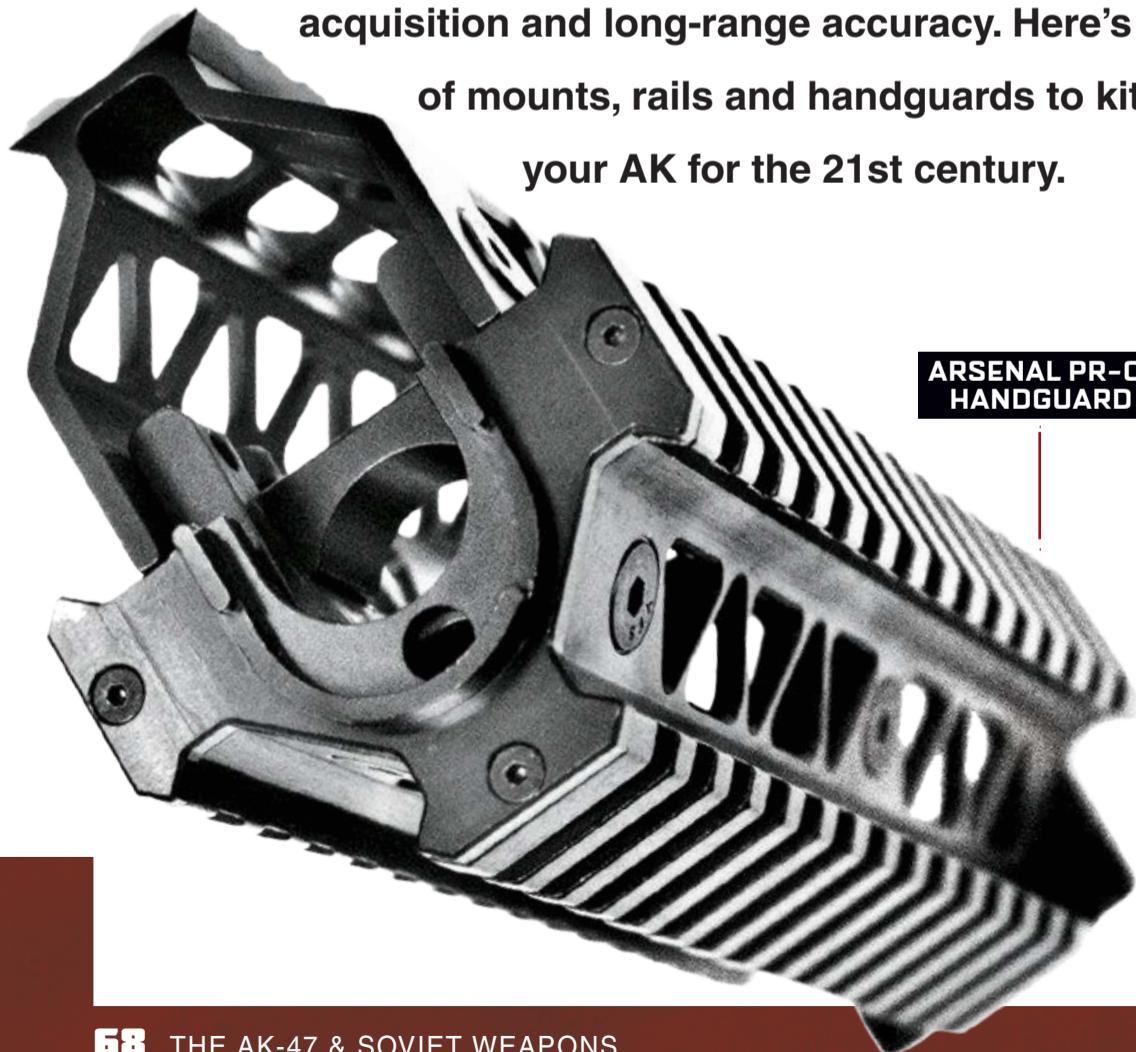
DoD photo

ROUND-UP

RAILS, MOUNTS & HANDGUARDS

BY ROBERT A. SADOWSKI

The AK was designed at a time when it was common practice to employ blued steel and wood furniture. Today's operators demand more options for their weapons. Aluminum rails and handguards enable an operator to "kit up" the AK and mount accessories that help control fire and stay on target. Optic mounts mean better target acquisition and long-range accuracy. Here's a list of mounts, rails and handguards to kit up your AK for the 21st century.



ARSENAL PR-01
HANDGUARD



PARABELLUM AK
ADAPTIVE
RAIL SYSTEM



KREBS CUSTOM
REAR SIGHT
RAIL SYSTEM



ARSENAL SM-13
SCOPE MOUNT



MIDWEST INDUSTRIES
AK MINI DOT MOUNT

MIDWEST INDUSTRIES
AK-SSK KEYMOD HANDGUARD



MIDWEST INDUSTRIES
AK 30MM
SCOPE SIDE MOUNT

“ ALUMINUM RAILS AND
HANDGUARDS ENABLE
AN OPERATOR TO ‘KIT UP’ THE AK
AND MOUNT ACCESSORIES THAT HELP
CONTROL FIRE AND STAY ON TARGET.”



ARSENAL PR-01 HANDGUARD

The PR-01 minimizes weight while providing maximum strength by using a triangular support design and utilizing aircraft-grade aluminum construction. The Picatinny-style quad rails on the bottom and sides have 14 slots, with nine slots on the top, all with identification marks for quick repeat attachment of accessories. The PR-01 will fit both milled and stamped receivers, and it is designed to accept a cleaning rod with the handguard installed. (arsenalinc.com; 702-643-2220)

ARSENAL SM-13 SCOPE MOUNT

Arsenal's SM-13 side-attaching scope mount for AK variants is used by foreign militaries. The one-piece, CNC-machined mount is constructed of aircraft-grade aluminum, so it is strong yet lightweight—only 5.7 ounces. The Picatinny rails give users more than 7.5 inches of rail space to mount a variety of optics. The locking mechanism offers quick and easy installation and removal with no loss of zero. (arsenalinc.com; 702-643-2220)

KREBS CUSTOM REAR SIGHT RAIL SYSTEM

The Krebs Custom Kalashnikov Rear Sight Rail (KRSR) System mounts securely to an AK's rear sight base and rear trunnion. The matte black KRSR features a 7.5-inch Picatinny rail and a windage-adjustable M16-A2 aperture rear sight. The rail section is machined from 7075 aluminum and the rear locking mechanism is made from carbon steel. (krebscustom.com; 847-487-7776)

MIDWEST INDUSTRIES AK MINI DOT MOUNT

The AK Mini Dot Mount from Midwest Industries mounts to the rear sight of standard AK-47 and AK-74 rifles with no complicated gunsmithing required. The mount allows a user to install a small red-dot sight while still being able to use the iron sights. The mount has a rear sight built in. The top cover can be removed with the mount in place. (midwestindustriesinc.com; 262-896-6780)

MIDWEST INDUSTRIES AK-SSK KEYMOD HANDGUARD

The Midwest Industries Extended AK-SSK KeyMod Handguard fits most AK-47s, AK-74s and other variants as well as stamped or machined receivers. The lower rail extends 9.5 inches for an additional mounting surface and features five anti-rotational, quick-detach sockets for push-button swivels. One 2.1-inch KeyMod rail is included. The 11.4-ounce handguard is made from 6061 aluminum and is hardcoat anodized. (midwestindustriesinc.com; 262-896-6780)

MIDWEST INDUSTRIES AK 30MM SCOPE SIDE MOUNT

Midwest Industries' AK 30mm Scope Side Mount attaches to AK rifles with built-in receiver mounts by using its ADM Auto Lock System, which uses a lever to clamp on the mount/scope. The unit accepts scopes with 30mm tubes, and reduction rings for one-piece tubes are available. (midwestindustriesinc.com; 262-896-6780)

PARABELLUM AK ADAPTIVE RAIL SYSTEM

Parabellum Armament's AKARS (AK Advantage Rail System) unit replaces the rear sight leaf and the receiver's top cover on most AK-47 and AK-74 rifles, allowing users to easily mount optics including scopes, red dots, infrared sights and others. The cover integrates a Picatinny-style rail, and even when the cover is removed for maintenance the optic will retain its zero. The cover also allows for the use of iron sights since the AKARS has a built-in rear sight aperture. (parabellumarmament.com; 844-927-4327)

RAILS, MOUNTS & HANDGUARDS



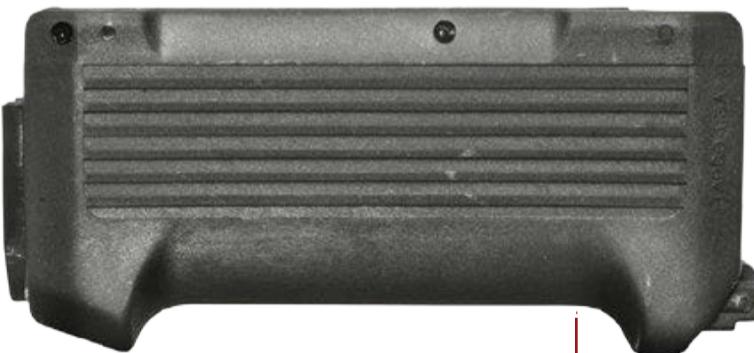
PARABELLUM AK-BAR



SCOUT SCOPE AK MOUNT KIT



STRIKE INDUSTRIES AK REAR SIGHT RED DOT RAIL



TAPCO GALIL STYLE HANDGUARD



TEXAS WEAPON SYSTEMS AK DOG LEG RAIL GEN II

PARABELLUM AK-BAR

The AK-BAR (AK Battle Action Rail) interfaces directly with Parabellum Armament's RCS, giving it a secure mounting point to free-float the barrel. The AK-BAR features a Picatinny rail along the top and multiple KeyMod slots. The handguard has a width of 1.5 inches, giving it a thin, sleek feel. The magazine guide ramp assists users with reloads. Easy to install, the AK-BAR is made from hardcoat anodized 6061-T6 aluminum. (parabellumarmament.com; 844-927-4327)

RS REGULATE AK-300

The rugged AK-300 Modular Side Mount will work on all side-rail-equipped AK rifles. Similar to the Russian design, the patented AK-300 mount uses a throw lever that clamps onto the side rail of the receiver. As a result, the system allows users to mount optics centered over the bore and be mounted low enough that iron sights can be co-witnessed through a red-dot. The top cover can still be removed to disassemble the rifle without removing the mount. Made from Type 3 hardcoat anodized 6061-T6 aluminum, it features a titanium-based locking system. (rsregulate.com)

SCOUT SCOPE AK MOUNT KIT

The Scout Scope Mount Kit requires no drilling or tapping. The universal base attaches to the AK's rear sight mount with no permanent alterations required. When installed, the mount provides the optimum eye relief for a red-dot sight or a forward-mounted scout scope. There's also no need to remove the mount to perform routine maintenance and field-stripping. (scoutscopes.com; 512-658-6930)

STRIKE INDUSTRIES AK REAR SIGHT RED DOT RAIL

The AK Rear Sight Rail for Low Profile Red Dot Optics from Strike Industries easily converts the rear sight of most AKs into a Picatinny rail that is designed specifically for low profile red dot optics from Burris, Trijicon, Aimpoint and others. No gunsmithing required. The rail is constructed of aircraft-grade 6061 aluminum with a hardcoat anodized finish. (strikeindustries.com)

TAPCO GALIL STYLE HANDGUARD

The TAPCO Galil Style Handguard offers horizontal grooves for a better grip than standard military-style handguards. The handguard is manufactured from high-strength, reinforced composite and is compatible with most AK-style rifles. It also offers better ventilation to reduce barrel heat during sustained fire. Color choices include dark earth and black. (tapco.com; 800-554-1445)

TEXAS WEAPON SYSTEMS AK DOG LEG RAIL GEN II

Texas Weapon Systems' Dog Leg Rail Gen II allows for very low mounted optics by combining the receiver cover with a Picatinny-style rail with 17 slots; the PSL model has 19 slots. The cam lock's release mechanism keeps the cover and optic secure for a constant zero. The cover also has a hinged front tab for easy field stripping. Specific models are available for AK-47/AK-74, Yugo AK-47 and Romanian PSL rifle platforms. (texasweaponsystems.com; 512-554-1136)

UTG PRO QD AK SIDE MOUNT

The UTG Pro Quick-detachable AK Side Mount is made in the U.S. out of high-quality, aircraft-grade aluminum. The side mount is compatible with most AK-type rifles with side rail mounts. Slide the mount onto the dovetail and use the ergonomic quick lock/release lever with adjustable tension to tighten in place. The top rail has 16 Picatinny slots, plus it has a deep U-shaped cut in the top rails, allowing an operator to use iron sights and optics. (leapers.com; 734-542-1500)



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SECOND-GENERATION AK



The evolution and history of the Kalashnikov milled receiver.



BY FRANK IANNAMICO Photos by the author, courtesy of the U.S. Marine Corps National Museum

As Mikhail Kalashnikov was studying various firearms designs he became particularly impressed with the simple, all-metal stamped steel construction of the 7.62x25mm *Pistolet Pulemet Sudayeva*, or PPS43 submachine gun, which was designed by Soviet arms designer Aleksei Ivanovich Sudayev. The PPS43 required far less labor hours and critical materials to manufacture than earlier designs. Kalashnikov realized that pressed steel construction was the way future small arms would be made. Three basic principles would be followed in all of Kalashnikov's designs: simple, reliable and inexpensive.

The very first production AK rifles were manufactured with stamped sheet metal receivers, before the more com-

monly known milled receiver model appeared. There was no designation change regardless of the receiver type; they were simply designated as *Avtomat Kalashnikova* rifles.

Note: In this article, I use the AK rifle designations Type 1, Type 2 and Type 3, which have been widely accepted as a means in which to identify particular AK models. However, these are not official nomenclatures, and are only used to clarify which variant is being referred to.

Retroactive Solution

While the stamped sheet metal AK receiver was thought to be suitably robust, the technology necessary for mass-producing such a receiver firing a rifle cartridge was lacking. There have been many conflicting accounts of exactly why the Russians went from the original stamped Type 1

receiver to the milled Type 2. Typically, the Soviets did not divulge a lot of information, especially regarding a design problem. Two of the problems reportedly experienced with Kalashnikov's Type 1 AK rifle were receiver strength and accuracy. One could surmise that the problem was that the trunnion was not adequately supported in the receiver. Other accounts report that it was difficult to hold manufacturing tolerances due to warping of the receiver after riveting and heat-treating.

During the late 1940s, the only solution to the Type 1 receiver problem was to switch to a receiver manufactured by the previous and proven method of machining the component from a steel forging. Using this older procedure resulted in slower, more expensive production. While the new milled receiver

was being designed and subsequently manufactured, production of the AK rifles with the stamped steel receivers continued at Izhmash until being phased out around 1951, at which time rifle production was switched completely over to the Type 2 forged/milled receiver. The weight of the new Type II receiver was 6.34 ounces heavier than a Type 1.

To design a new receiver for the AK rifle, a team was assembled at Izhmash headed by Valeriy Kharkov. The Izhmash factory had a lot of experience with forged receivers, and a new AK forged steel receiver was readied for production. The new receiver was machined from a solid block of ordnance-grade steel that weighed approximately 6 pounds. After being subjected to 120 separate machining operations, the weight of the finished receiver was trimmed



A 1951 dated Type 1 AK rifle with a stamped sheet metal receiver. The Type 1 was produced from 1949 until 1951, when it was replaced by the milled receiver Type 2.



A 1953 dated folding-stock Type 2 with milled receiver. Note that the lightening cut on the receiver is parallel with the top edge of the receiver.



Photo courtesy author

to 1.4 pounds. The guide rails for the bolt carrier assembly were machined directly into the inside of the receiver. No separate barrel trunnion was necessary as the nose of the forged receiver and barrel was threaded. The forged/milled receiver had distinctive areas machined out of each side just forward of the mode of fire selector lever to reduce its weight. This also provides an easy way to instantly distinguish a milled receiver from both the original AK and later AKM stamped versions.

The rectangular machined cuts on the Type 2 receiver differed slightly from those of the later Type 3 receiver. The Type 2 receiver cuts ran parallel with the top of the receiver, while the later Type 3 cuts ran parallel with the bottom of the

receiver's edge. The front bottom edge of the receiver ahead of the magazine well was also milled out to reduce weight. A rectangular tab on the back of the wooden lower handguard was designed to fit into the machined out area and a thin sheet metal plate was used to cover this area. The Type 2 receiver also had an L-shaped step located at the front upper part on the right side of the receiver; the protrusion was a surface located just above the charging handle. On the left side top of the receiver was a machined ledge that ran from the front to the rear of the receiver. The lower edge of the sheet metal top cover rested on the ledge. The full stock Type 2 AK can be readily identified by the extension at the rear of the receiver to

attach the wooden buttstock.

The rear of the receiver was slightly angled rather than straight; the extension was also angled to interface with the receiver. The extension was attached to the

receiver by a vertical lug that fit into a T-channel machined into the back of the receiver. The piece was secured to the receiver by a single pin placed laterally through the back of the receiver. The extension had two tangs extending rearward in which to attach the buttstock using two wood screws, one through the top tang and one through the bottom tang. The extension allowed the same basic receiver design to be used for both the fixed and folding-stock models. The gas piston rod with the fluted shaft and the two-piece, telescoping-tube-type recoil spring guides were retained on the early production AK with the Type 2 receiver.

Forging Ahead

The Type 2 AK was a transitional model that used a compilation of parts from the Type 1, the Type 3 and some parts that were unique to the Type 2. Early production used the thick, 1.6mm receiver top covers, but switched over to the thinner top covers during production. The steel tab required for the Type 1's two-piece pistol grip panels was discarded and the pistol grip redesigned. The grip was



View of a Type 2 receiver's right side. The selector position markings have been hand-inscribed and the selector lever detents are round. Many Type 2 receivers lack selector position markings. The receiver has several "ledges," one below the cocking handle, the other behind the selector lever supporting the top cover.



made from a single piece of wood that was attached to the receiver by a machine screw that extended vertically through the center of the grip into the receiver. The threaded boss that accommodated the grip screw was a separate machined piece, secured to the receiver under the rear trigger-guard tab with two rivets.

The pistol grip was also redesigned to have less of a rearward angle than that used on the early stamped receiver. The gas tube with the vent holes placed horizontally along the length of the tube on both sides at 3 o'clock and 9 o'clock positions was used on early production models. However, some Type 2 rifles have been examined that were fitted with the later gas tube design that has the ribs/gas holes relocated to the 10

o'clock and 2 o'clock positions.

The mode of fire selector lever was designed with two grip surfaces, each bent outward at a 90-degree angle to make downward movement of the lever easier. To retain the selector lever in position, two shallow circular depressions were drilled into the receiver. The fire positions were not always marked on the receiver. Several examples of this model that were examined during my research had the positions inscribed by hand. The selector positions on Russian Kalashnikov rifles are Cyrillic letters "AV" for *avtomatichiskiy* or full-automatic fire, and "OD" representing *odinochniy* for single or semi-automatic fire. The full fixed stock Type 2 milled receiver rifle with early slab-sided magazine has a loaded weight of 10.38 pounds and an overall

length of 34.5 inches.

The Type 2 receiver made for the folding-stock AKS model differed only slightly from the full wooden stock rifle. The rear part of the receiver was angled like the full stock model, but without the extension block. Located in the receiver was a hole in which the pivot pin for the stock was placed. The loaded weight of a folding-stock Type 2 AK rifle with the early slab-sided magazine is 10.5 pounds and the overall length is 34.5 inches.

Lightening The Load

It is difficult to define what constitutes a "correct" Type 2 AK rifle. They were largely transitional weapons, which included many elements from both the Type 1 and Type 3 designs, as well as their own unique features. The AK rifle with the Type 2 receiver was in production from 1951 to 1955. The Type 1 stamped and Type 2 milled AK receivers were only manufactured by Russia, whereas the Type 3 became the licensed copy and most common AK in Russia and other manufacturing countries.

One of the primary problems encountered with the Type 2 AK receiver was the method in which the wooden buttstock was attached using the steel extension block. The design of the stock attachment

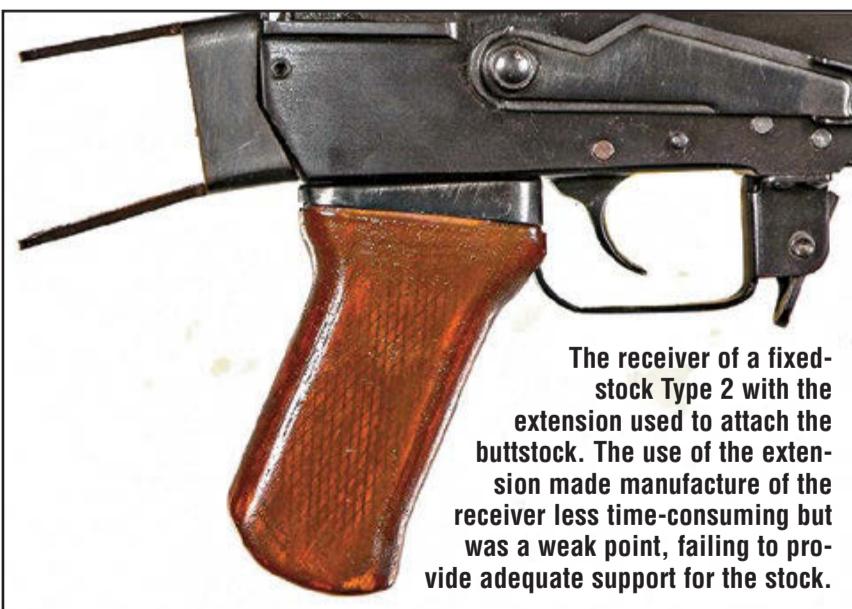
A Type 3 AK. Note the sling attachment points, a weak area of the Type 2, have been relocated to the side of the receiver and the gas block. The receiver extension to support the buttstock of the Type 2 has been replaced by top tangs integral with the receiver, the bottom tang securely riveted to the receiver.

The Type 3 receiver lightening cuts are slightly larger and parallel with the bottom surface of the receiver. The receiver is basically flat, lacking the top cover ledges of the Type 2, making the receiver lighter and easier to manufacture.

made it prone to breakage from a lateral force or stress. During 1953, a new receiver was placed into production, the Type 3. The new receiver was designed so that the top stock tang was made as an integral part of the receiver; the steel lower tang was made as a separate piece that was securely riveted to the floor of the receiver. The stock



“ OTHER MODIFICATIONS TO THE TYPE 3 INCLUDED A GAS PISTON ROD THAT WAS CIRCULAR WITH A SMALLER OUTSIDE DIAMETER, ELIMINATING THE FLUTING. ”



The receiver of a fixed-stock Type 2 with the extension used to attach the buttstock. The use of the extension made manufacture of the receiver less time-consuming but was a weak point, failing to provide adequate support for the stock.

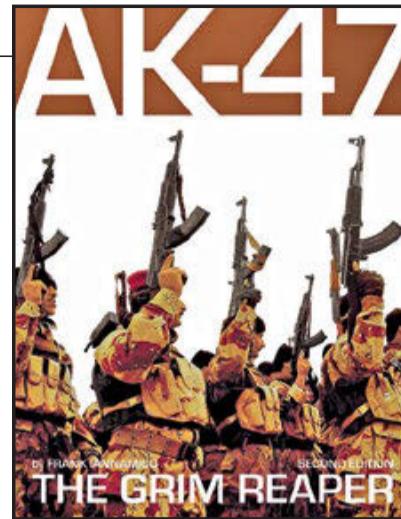
was designed with a step at the front that fit into a recess at the back of the receiver. Although this required an extensive amount of additional machining (that the Type 2 was designed to avoid), it was an effective solution to providing a sturdy attachment of the fixed buttstock to the receiver.

To reduce the overall weight of the Type 3 receiver

several areas were altered. The L-shaped step located at the top right side and the top cover ledge on the left side of the Type 2 milled receiver were eliminated; the top cover simply overlapped the side of the receiver. The top cover was made out of thinner sheet metal and redesigned having the lower edge indented slightly for strength. Due to the



A 1951 dated Type 2. The Type 1 and Type 2 were both manufactured that year, but production of the Type 1 soon ended and was superseded by the Type 2. This example lacks a manufacturer's logo.



Author's book on the AK-47,
The Grim Reaper.

top cover's decrease in thickness, the top leading edge of the cover had a small rectangular notch pressed into it. The notch was needed to provide a tight fit into the groove of the rear sight block that secured the front of the cover in place. The open space in the front sight tower had the lower edge of the opening beveled, shaving off a few additional ounces of weight. The milled rectangular areas located on each side

of the Type 3 AK receiver were increased in size, both vertically and horizontally, over the Type 2 receiver. A new lighter magazine was introduced that was manufactured from thinner steel; the new design had a series of reinforcing ribs pressed into it for strength.

The Type 3 receiver had many changes that were primarily designed to reduce the overall weight of the rifle. For each 16 grams the weight of the weapon could be reduced, one extra cartridge could be carried, one that could mean the difference between life or death for the soldier. ★

Editor's Note: Sections of this article have been excerpted from the author's book, AK-47: The Grim Reaper. Pick up a copy at smallarmsreview.com or call 702-565-0746.

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FEATURES A STAINLESS STEEL GUIDE FOR CLEANING ROD



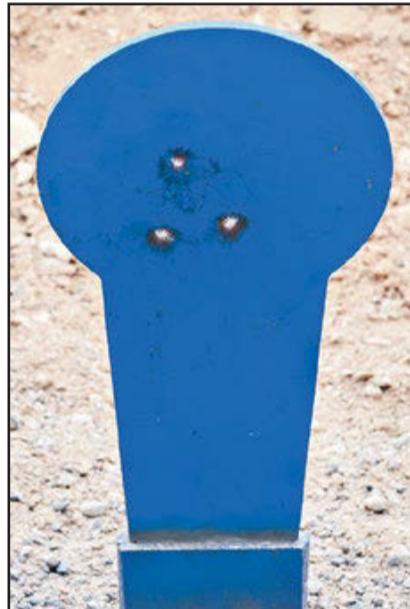
MASTER YOUR AK



SureFire Institute brings modern-day training to the timeless Kalashnikov design.

BY DAVID BAHDE

The AK-47 rifle is often unfairly maligned. This is especially true with those who consider other platforms the “ultimate” in fighting rifles. The AK debate is mired in emotion, myth and misinformation. The AK has its limitations—a tack-driving target rifle it is not, nor is it a gadget collector. And while you can certainly improve the AK’s ergonomics, you should pick another rifle if you plan on hanging 10 pounds of stuff on it. AKs are simple, no-nonsense fighting tools designed to operate in any condition, and in military form they continue to be some of the most prolific combat rifles on the planet. Whether chambered in 7.62x39mm (AK-47/AKM) or 5.45x39mm (AK-74), the AK platform is depend-



Fired from prone, using military surplus ammo, author's AK-74 produced a more than adequate 100-yard groups.

able, sufficiently accurate and proven to be effective.

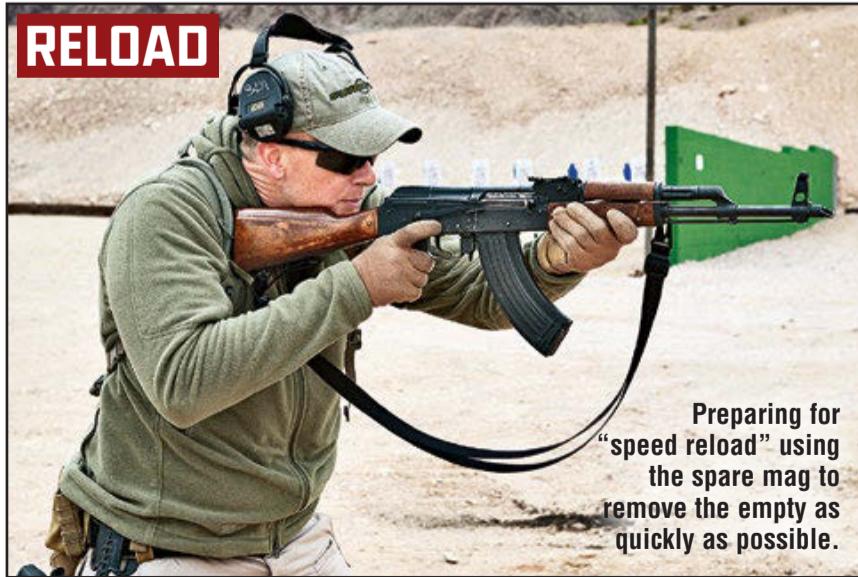
The majority of rifle training here in the United States is geared for the AR, the most popular platform in the country

and familiar to instructors and students alike. Using an AK (especially a stock model) in these classes can be problematic, as instructors often have no clue as to how to teach it. Thus, locating classes designed around the AK can be really helpful to enthusiasts and users wanting to maximize their capabilities with the platform. Unfortunately, such classes are few and quality training is rare. Too often the courses are more about preparing for doomsday than training with your rifle. It is nice to have professional instruction taught by experienced operators, and SureFire Institute delivers exactly that with its AK-47/74 Operator class.

Tier-One Training

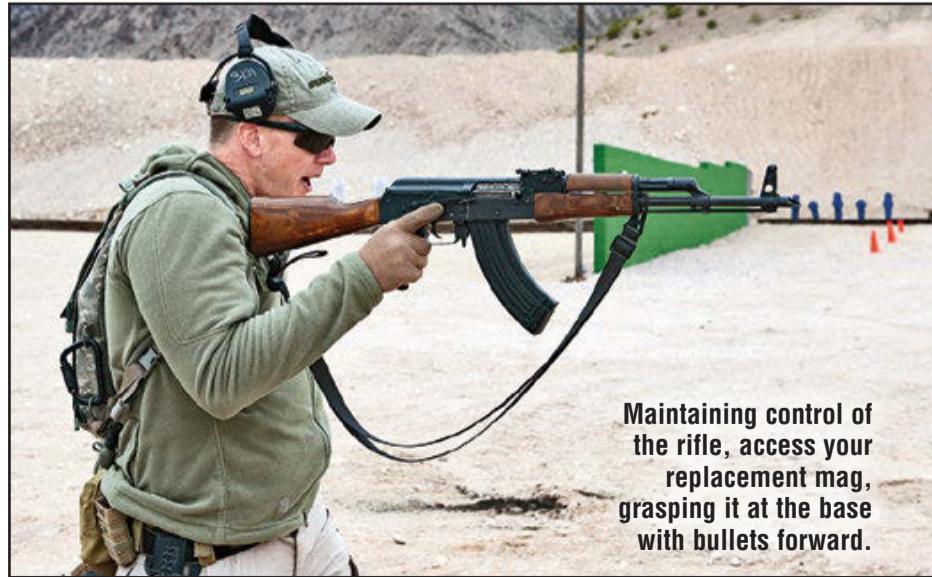
SureFire Institute has been providing excellent firearms

training in Corona, California, for years. Retired Huntington Police Officer Bill Murphy is the lead instructor and currently works part-time as a Los Angeles County Sheriff's deputy. He has been teaching officers, troops, Tier-One operators and civilians all over the world for decades. He recently had the opportunity to open a SureFire Institute facility in Nevada, bringing his expertise to a wider audience and, without the firearms restrictions in California, utilizing a much larger variety of weapons. Minutes from Las Vegas, the SureFire facility features three state-of-the-art ranges that allow for shooting out to 300 yards, plus a classroom and additional facilities. The almost unlimited space surrounding the facility offers the opportunity for significant future expansion.



RELOAD

Preparing for “speed reload” using the spare mag to remove the empty as quickly as possible.



Maintaining control of the rifle, access your replacement mag, grasping it at the base with bullets forward.



Fired from kneeling at ranges extending to 300 yards, the author's AK-74 hit steel with regularity using nothing more than a microdot sight.



Bill taught in the Middle East for years, and his SureFire Institute staff consists of retired and currently operating military trainers with extensive experience using the AK in the field. These elements keep the class focused on the basic operation of a simple AK rifle, with the primary goal of preparing

troops, contractors and professionals to pick up an AK in the field and fight with it. This makes the SureFire Institute class perfect for those unfamiliar with the platform or for purists who keep their

AKs unchanged. In fact, everyone but me used a school gun provided by SureFire Insti-

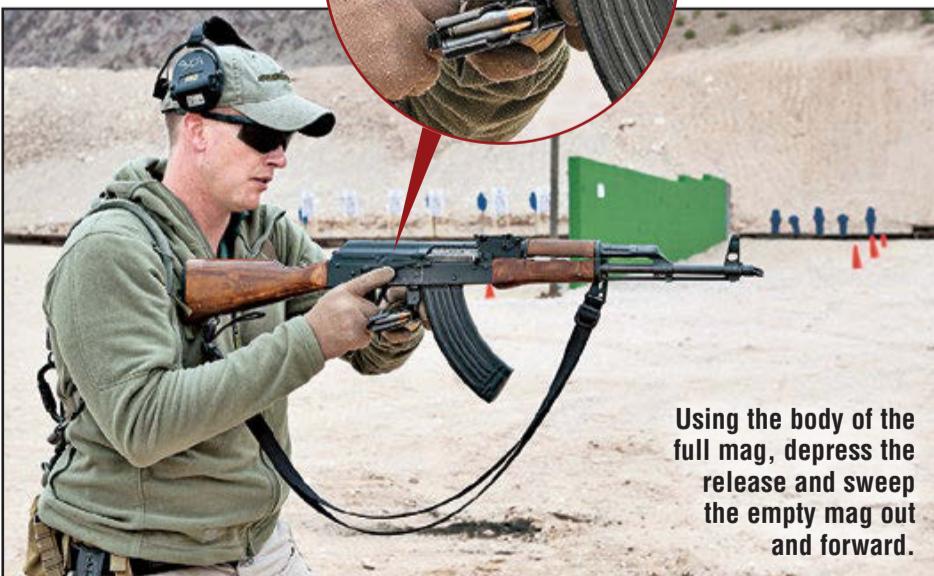
tute. If you are not sure about the AK, take the class. It will give you a good understanding of the platform, including its strengths and weaknesses.

AK Upgrades

During the training I used two different rifles, and both were built or altered by Steve Palano of Barlow's Custom Guns. Palano is a former

Army Ranger with a no-nonsense attitude about weapons and a huge wealth of knowledge about the AK system. He has spent years fighting with, fighting against and building AK-based rifle systems. He is constantly working to make his enhancements better, always focusing on operational viability. Both rifles utilize his left-side charging handle modification, magazine funnel and extended magazine release. The AK-74 has his flat trigger modification, while the AKM uses a standard G2 double-hook trigger. None of the internals have been altered.

The AK-74 is an otherwise stock Interarms gun with a fixed Ace stock and Midwest Industries railed forend. An Insight Technologies MRDS is mounted in the top half of the forend, allowing for partial co-witnessing of the front sight. Incredibly rugged, the MRDS permits battery replacement without removing the sight, is adjustable for intensity and is easily adjustable for windage with a simple screwdriver. A Haley Strategic weapon light is mounted to an 11 o'clock rail. The entire rifle is coated in a Cerakote Desert Camo pattern from Red Creek Tactical. It not only looks nice but also works well in the field.



Using the body of the full mag, depress the release and sweep the empty mag out and forward.



Insert the full mag, completing the reload while never removing your control hand and staying on target.



My AKM started as a Draco pistol with an 11-inch barrel. Blackheart International added an AR stock and licensed it as an SBR. I replaced the stock with a DPH Arms solid aluminum unit. The same Midwest Industries forend is utilized, this time with an Aimpoint Micro T-1 with a 2-MOA dot that offers truly co-witnessed iron sights. A tritium front sight and Krebs ghost-ring rear sight were added. The AKM's coating is original, with regular touch-ups made via canned spray paint. Throughout the course I wore Haley Strategic's new chest rig, which accommodated both AK-74 and AK-47 mags. The chest rig holds four rifle magazines plus two pistol magazines and has two other utility pouches. One large open pouch is set up well for smoke or other

devices. It can be used as a stand-alone rig or easily attached to plate carriers.

Day One

The classroom portion consisted of a half-hour of setup and a safety briefing. Once the paperwork was out of the way, it was time to go hands-on. With the exception of me and one other attendee, none of the students had ever fired an AK—one female shooter had never spent any time with a rifle outside a .22 LR, making it a diverse group. Moving to the covered patio, Bill started with a detailed discussion on the rifle platform and its various components. Each rifle was broken down to its normal cleaning condition. Parts were inspected, cleaned, oiled and re-installed, highlighting the



Standard reloads require you to remove the empty mag first by grasping the release and rocking it forward.

simplicity of the system. The sighting system was covered, including the zeroing procedure for the AK.

Zeroing your rifles is too often overlooked in AK classes. Unless students were expected to arrive with zeroed rifles, the zeroing process is critical. Starting at 25 yards, we set up our rifles to impact about 1.5 inches low, putting them dead on at 50 yards and within a few inches, up or down, out to 300 yards. At 50 yards our zeroes were confirmed and finally dialed in at 100 yards.

My AK-74 was flawless and pretty accurate—groups at 25 and 50 yards were right at an inch or less. At 100 yards from an unsupported prone position, I was able to produce a solid group at right around 1.5 inches. With Hornady's V-Max ammunition, this rifle tends to hold close to 1.5 MOA using the MRDS or a similar dot system.

After lunch we started in on reloading. To keep things simple, we were encouraged to use only the speedload. We covered tactical loads, but the idea was to keep the guns loaded and running for the remainder of the class. Several methods for running the bolt were covered. With a standard AK, the bolt-running method depends on the situation and your gear—know all the methods and use what works best for you. Once everyone could

keep the rifles fed, it was time to work on positions. Rounds were fired on steel at 50 and 100 yards from the prone, seated, kneeling and squatting positions, and we had the means to tactically move between the positions. Everyone left the range with zeroed rifles and simple operational skills. Daytime shooting ended with full-auto AK-47 familiar-



Quick safety manipulation can be tough to master, especially on out of the box military grade rifles.

ization. We each ran a “one 3-round magazine, one trigger press” drill. It not only was fun, but also showed how difficult controlling a 7.62mm AK on full-auto can be.

After dinner we returned for the night shoot. We started with no light, which gave us a sense of how hard seeing those sights in the dark can be—even in failing light, they are hard to pick up, and in darkness they are all but impossible. Using my

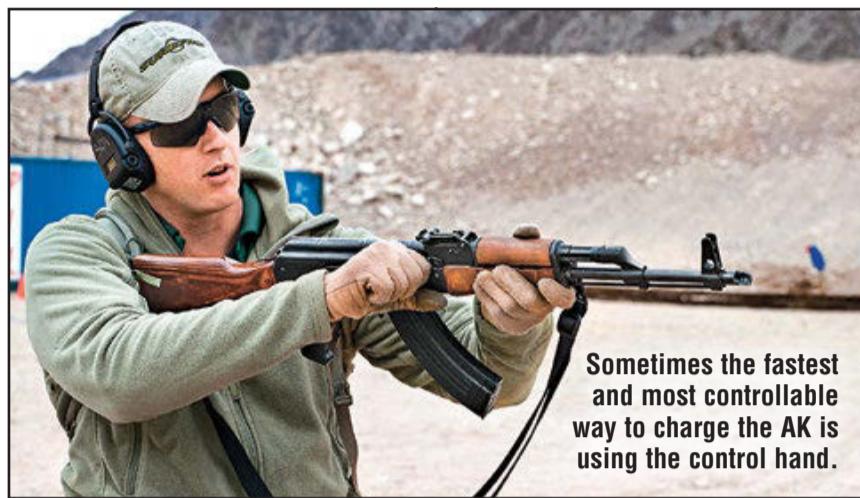
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The polymer grip features a storage compartment.





Sometimes the fastest and most controllable way to charge the AK is using the control hand.

AKM at 50 yards, I could identify neither the target nor the sights (even with the Aimpoint Micro T-1). But add some light and there are no issues. With my light and using the red dot, I was able to see and hit the target at 100 yards, and with a really powerful light you can make it out to 300 yards. The bottom line is you need a light on your long gun.

Day Two

We started the day with a brief lecture on the trajectory of the various AK rounds. The lecture was simple and straightforward, mostly providing us an idea of how things work at 200 and 300 yards. It was a good illustration of how the 50-yard zero works with

a center hold, from 25 to 300 yards, for hits on target. Starting at 100 yards, the zeros were confirmed from prone, and zeroing with the Aimpoint Micro T-1 was convenient. No tools needed—just use the caps. (Just don't lose the caps. While you can move the dials with a bullet point, the caps make doing so much easier.)

Moving to 150 yards, we fired from all of the basic positions. Prone can be difficult with the long AK magazines, but it is workable. Bill encouraged us to rest the magazine on the ground, and it worked great. I've done this for years and have never induced a malfunction. Moving to 200 yards, I expected the 11-inch gun to fade a bit, but not so.

It nailed steel easily and gave me the chance to really dial it in. The 2-MOA dot makes longer range a bit easier—an other nice feature of the T-1 sight. Hits at 200 yards from the kneeling position were regular, and from prone, easy. At 300 yards this little rifle surprised me. From prone and while using the magazine as a rest, I never missed. When I moved to kneeling, it was the same thing. So long as the rifle was steady, it smacked the steel time and time again. Even the iron-sighted rifles were getting hits. An Air Force tactical operator never missed, with his gun nailing the steel at 300 yards from every conceivable position. Was his a target rifle? Nope, but I would not want to be 300 yards from the business end of it, especially with him behind the sights!

We finished out the day working on sling techniques and bringing the rifle to bear. Pretty normal stuff, but I did find the shorter barrel problematic with a couple "standard" sling techniques. Luckily, I use a sling, not a carry strap. Using my Blue Force as either a single- or two-point sling,

I experienced zero issues. By attaching a couple of Magpul multi-mission clips (from Magpul's MS3 sling), the Blue Force was really slick. Magpul's sling is great, just too small for me. Then we trained more in full-auto

The author's modified Draco has proven to be incredibly reliable, accurate and user-friendly with several custom modifications.

fire. This time we were able to use two- and three-shot bursts. The 7.62x39mm is still a bit hard to control, but it's certainly possible. Moving to the AK-74 in 5.45x39mm was an eye-opener. There is a reason this caliber remains the primary Russian choice: It works and it is very controllable on full-auto, accurate and fast cycling.

Real-World Ready

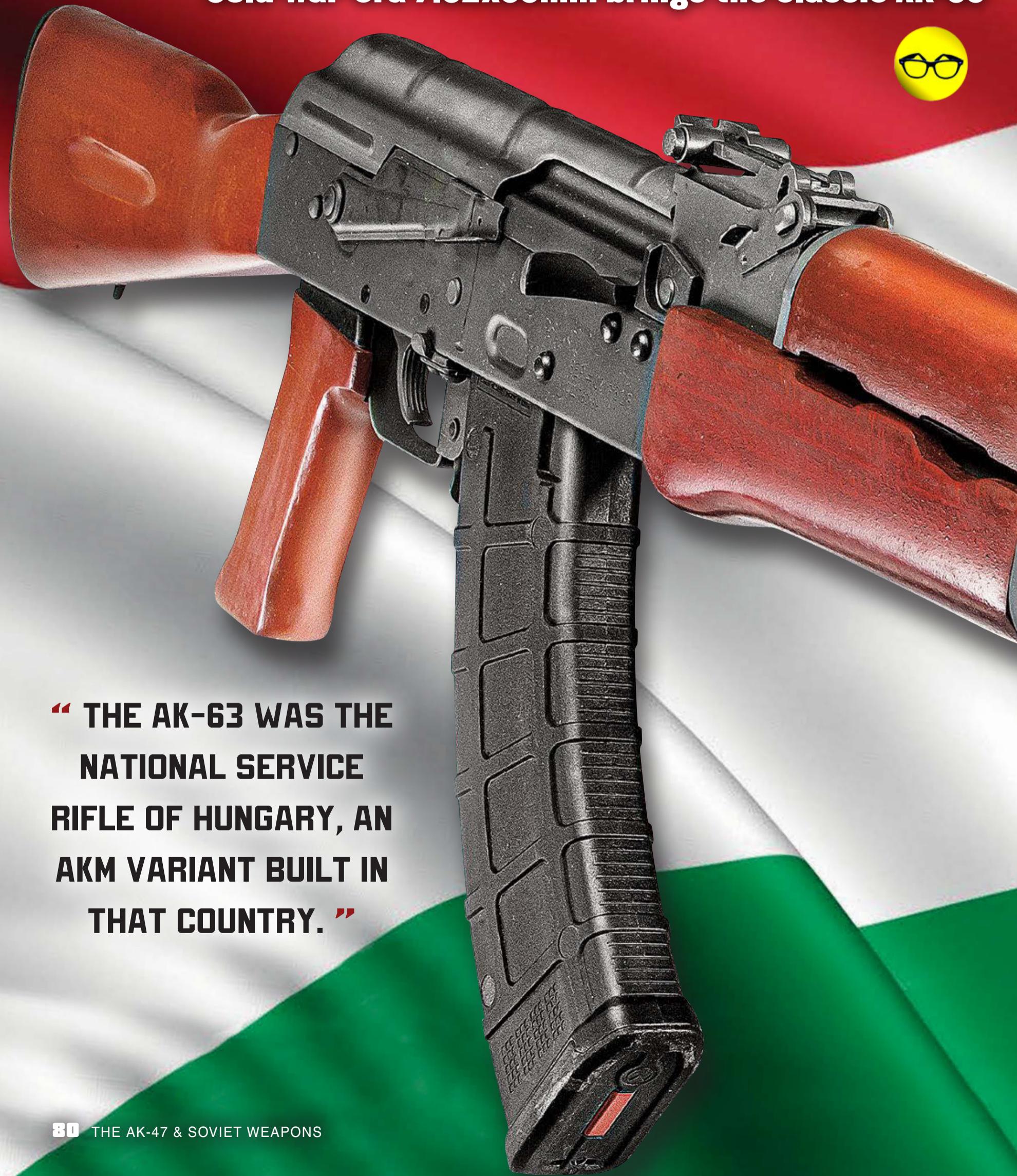
The class was great and a ton of fun. The ability to use school rifles and shoot fully automatic versions is a nice touch. For operators who just need familiarization or for those just interested in the platform, there is no need to buy a rifle. If you are going overseas, this course prepares you to pick up and AK and get it into the fight. Full-auto AK rifles are rare, expensive and unlawful in many areas. So being able to shoot them at the SureFire Institute course is an excellent opportunity to get a true feel for the weapon.

Throughout the class there were zero malfunctions with any of the rifles. I used only about 500 rounds or so, but combine that with all the other students' rounds and that is a ton of shooting with zero malfunctions. Using Hornady's ammunition my rifles were as accurate as these calibers get, all from mechanically stock rifles—none of my enhancements affect operation, only how you operate them. Is the AK going to take the target competitions by storm? No. Nor is it going to convert those who are emotionally attached to their particular rifles. But the AK is a great rifle that's been proven in every conceivable condition worldwide. For more information, visit surefireinstitute.com or call 714-701-9918.



INTERARMS

Cold War-era 7.62x39mm brings the classic AK-63



**“ THE AK-63 WAS THE
NATIONAL SERVICE
RIFLE OF HUNGARY, AN
AKM VARIANT BUILT IN
THAT COUNTRY. ”**

HUNGARIAN AKM

design to our shores!

BY DENIS PRISBREY • PHOTOS BY SEAN UTLEY

The AK-47 is, of course, the most widely produced military rifle of all time,

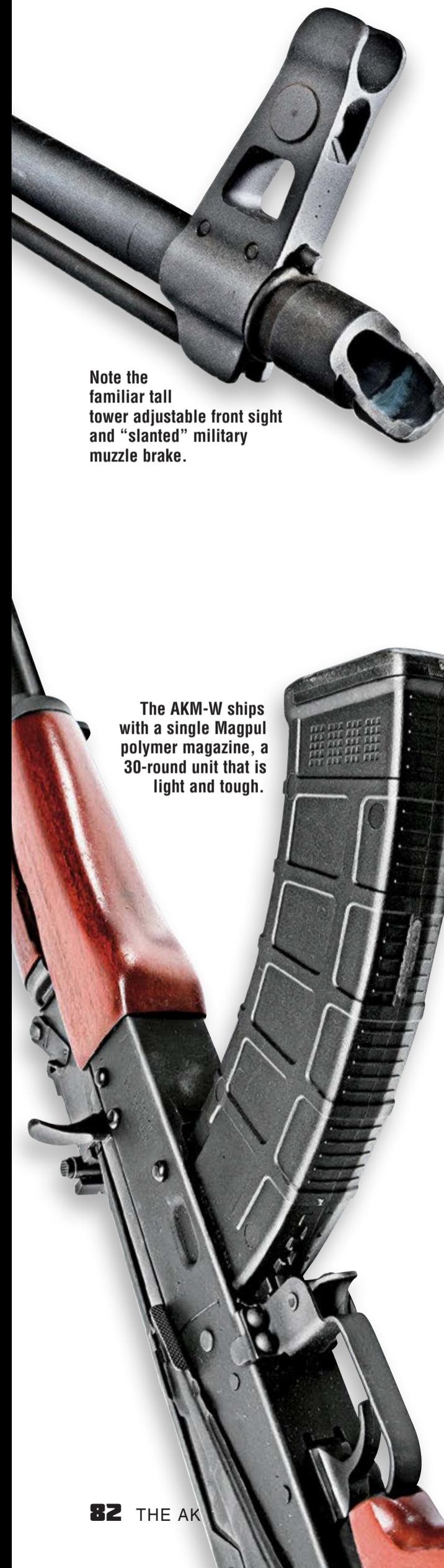
and besides its popularity outside our borders with military and pseudo-military users, it's safe to also call it the second most popular military-based design (in semi-auto form) here in the U.S., coming in only behind the perennial favorite—the homegrown AR-15 in all of its many versions and configurations. The AK-47's legendary reliability and mid-range ballistics are its two strongest selling points, and they sell the

platform very well. So well, in fact, that the market demand has occasionally exceeded its reach, and the days of the \$299 AK are long gone.

Traditionally, semi-auto AKs sold here have been based around "kits" or parts sets that originated from stripped-down guns (minus their full-auto receivers and parts) that had been surplussed out by various foreign nations. These kits were rebuilt in the U.S. with domestic receivers and enough U.S.-made parts to meet federal determinations of what constitutes a legal "Made In USA" status. Other importers have brought in semi-auto AKs that were either converted or built in their country of origin as semi-autos to begin with. But as the stocks of foreign parts kits, particularly barrels, has diminished through long-term sales and newer governmental import regulations, we're seeing more parts being manufactured here, and more guns beginning to transition into U.S. manufacture. This has been predictable. Foreign stocks couldn't last forever, prices based on cheap surplus kits couldn't hold indefinitely, and with an increase in parts that cost more to fabricate also comes an increase in overall pricing.

All of this, coupled with high demand and the occasional garage tinkerer, has led

A classic redhead, Interarms' new family of Hungarian-based AK-63s offers a known build by a known company.



Note the familiar tall tower adjustable front sight and "slanted" military muzzle brake.

The AKM-W ships with a single Magpul polymer magazine, a 30-round unit that is light and tough.



Right-side controls are standard: cocking handle, ejection port, and safety.



Pivoting safety lever was fitted tightly. Shown activated where it also acts as a dustcover.



The slab-sided pistol grip is correct for the Hungarian AKM family.



The AK-63 featured correct Hungarian vented gas tube and no-palm swell forend.

to a very convoluted and fluid manufacturing scene, and a very wide variety of AK-47 configurations and quality. Importers and manufacturers have come and gone, and if you don't study up and know your subject, it can be a very bewildering process today in choosing which one to buy. While the AK-47 has loose enough tolerances in general to make certain parts interchangeable, even from country to country, saying "An AK is an AK, what does it matter?" can leave you open to great unhappiness and to losing a fair amount of money down the drain. Build quality is important and you need to have confidence in your gun before you lay out that cash.

There's a new AK in town that you should know about if you happen to be looking for a known build. It comes from the current Interarms division of High Standard, in four different versions. You'll be seeing these appearing in shops, and if you have any questions, here's your chance to do the research so you'll know what you're looking at.

Red Defender

Several of the new semi-automatic Interarms AKMs, with varying stock and rail options, are all based on the Hungarian AK-63. The AK-63 was the national service rifle of Hungary, an AKM variant built in that country. Interarms is now offering four different variations on the Hungarian AK theme that include its AKM Pattern 47 with wood stock, AKM Pattern 47 with synthetic stock, AKMS Pat-

tern 47 underfolder with wood handguard and pistol grip, and the AKM Tactical with quad rails and additional features. To support these (and other makes) you can also order spare parts in the form of the company's semi-automatic-only fire control groups (trigger, hammer, disconnector) and Bulgarian-patterned poly stock sets (heat-shielded upper handguard), with wood options planned.

Sticking with the base model in conventional trim, the test sample sent for review was a redhead, with a dark-stained wood stock as well as a slab-sided pistol grip and forend. It is largely built from Hungarian parts. The test gun was an early sample of this model line; the forend is a correct flat style without palm swells and should be carried over, but the stock features AK-74-style grooves more appropriate for the smaller 5.45x39mm caliber than the original 7.62x39mm the gun's chambered for. Interarms says this should be corrected with newer wood stocks minus those grooves, and new wood stocks should carry over the steel buttplate with a cleaning kit trapdoor.

The gas block is the slanted AKM style, and just behind it rides a vented Hungarian gas tube. (Incidentally, all key parts on the rifle shown displayed matching serials on the cover, trunnion, bolt, carrier and rod guide, but Interarms advises that this may not be possible on all guns as the company runs through parts stocks.)

Inside, to meet federal requirements, the fire control group (double-hook trigger, ham-



mer and disconnect) are reliable U.S.-made parts from Interarms. The piston is a military-style chromed unit. With the current lack of imported surplus AK barrels due to governmental import bans, this one's is U.S.-made and fully chrome-lined (which in itself helps with the domestic parts count), and a good part of the reason behind the rifle's \$845 price tag. American-made, new barrels simply cost much more than surplus equivalents that used to be included with parts kits.

The receiver on the Hungarian models is an Interarms part, fabricated in the U.S. to match Bulgarian arsenal blueprints. Other external features are pretty much standard on form and function: right-hand ejection, a typical AK stamped, pivoting safety switch, an underbarrel cleaning rod, a windage/elevation adjustable front sight, elevation adjustable rear sight graduated out to 1,000 yards, small mag release paddle, and a slanted, screw-on muzzle brake.

Finish on this AK is a well-done grade of Parkerizing that covers all exterior metal parts, including the entire rear sight, with no bare steel anywhere. The gun ships with mag pouch, sling, oiler, cleaning kit and one polymer 30-round magazine from Magpul. European steel mags from Polish, Hungarian, Romanian and German sources are also sold separately by Interarms if you prefer them.

Shots Fired

On range day, firing under clear skies in calm 64-degree Fahrenheit weather, shooting the AKM was a familiar process due to its conventional AK form and operation. The front sight screws up or down between its protective ears for elevation,

SPECIFICATIONS INTERARMS AKM-W

CALIBER: 7.62x39mm

BARREL: 16 inches

OA LENGTH: 35.38 inches

WEIGHT: 6.5 pounds

STOCK: Red-stained hardwood

SIGHTS: Adjustable rear notch, adjustable front post

ACTION: Gas-operated, semi-auto

FINISH: Parkerized

CAPACITY: 30+1

MSRP: \$745



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Construction (rivets, etc.) were well-done and featured an excellent parkerized finish.



and it needed a couple turns down to bring the 100-yard point of impact up to point of aim on the 100-yard setting. There is an S-marked notch behind the number "1" that's commonly used as a battle zero. This raises the rear sight up to handle combat engagements out to 300 yards or so on a human-sized silhouette, but I typically use the "1" for more precise 100-yard zeroing on my AKs and did on this one. The front sight also, in traditional AK fashion, adjusts for windage by pushing the post base left or right inside the sight tower. Trust me on this—get the right adjustment tool. No AK I've ever fired came from its maker zeroed right on and this sample was no exception. If you're going to get into the Kalashnikov biz, you really need the tool instead of hammers, punches and needle-nosed pliers to sight your gun in. It's just a fact of life with the family.

Once zeroed correctly, the AKM ran its course through three different loads: Federal's brass-cased 123-grain soft-points, Hornady's steel-cased 123-grain poly-tipped SST, and Century Arm's Red Army steel-cased 123-grain full metal jackets (FMJ). The point of impact varied slightly between brands, as expected, but with identical bullet weights and

similar velocities between the three, there would be no need to change any sight settings on the gun when switching brands for most AK shooting needs. The platform is not meant to be a sniper-grade weapon, and pinpoint accuracy is not its biggest attraction.

Parting Shots

The AKM's fit was standard AK, which is short for people of 6-foot, 2-inch statures. The stock dimensions were created for shooters who view life from lower elevations, and the poly-stocks are the same length if you go in that direction, incidentally. They're useable, you just scrunch up a bit. The 5-pound trigger pull was long, as always, but smooth and had no trigger slap (none expected with that double-hook trigger), and the sights were also good despite their short-for-a-rifle sighting plane. Apertures are the fashionable way to fly nowadays, but the AK notch is wide enough for a usable amount of light on both sides of the front post. The sight picture is reasonably quick to pick up, the coarse elevation is very quick to adjust via the rear tangent and the sights are very rugged. The big safety lever was a very tight fit starting out, which is a plus in my book.

Function was your regular, everyday, light-recoiling AK, overall. The sample came bone dry and still ran perfectly through the initial chronographing, but I lubed it well with Break-Free CLP before going for accuracy. Early on, off the bench, I had three ejection malfunctions with empty brass not quite making it out of the port—one with the brass-cased Federal and two with the steel-cased Hornady. Once the gun started to wear in, though, ejection was more positive, out to about 20 feet.

Altogether, remembering accuracy can vary and the test sample would most likely tighten up a bit with barrel break-in, I'd consider this new Interarms Hungarian a viable candidate. For more information, visit highstandard.com or call 713-462-4200. ★

PERFORMANCE

INTERARMS AKM-W 7.62x39MM

Load	Velocity	Accuracy
Federal Fusion 123 SP	2,291	6.00
Hornady 123 SST	2,274	5.12
Red Army 123 FMJ	2,294	4.68

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by chronograph, and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 100 yards.



Denis Prisbrey photo



™ In 1990 a Navy SEAL was navigating a minefield when his pack failed. As his gear tumbled to the ground, he vowed that if he got out of there alive he would make gear the right way. Today this obsession with quality applies to everything we do. We're constantly researching, refining and perfecting every detail to provide gear that won't let you down. Because we're not just making stuff. We're honoring a vow.

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THE CHINESE TYPE 81



China's 7.62x39mm answer to the Soviet AKM series of weapon systems!

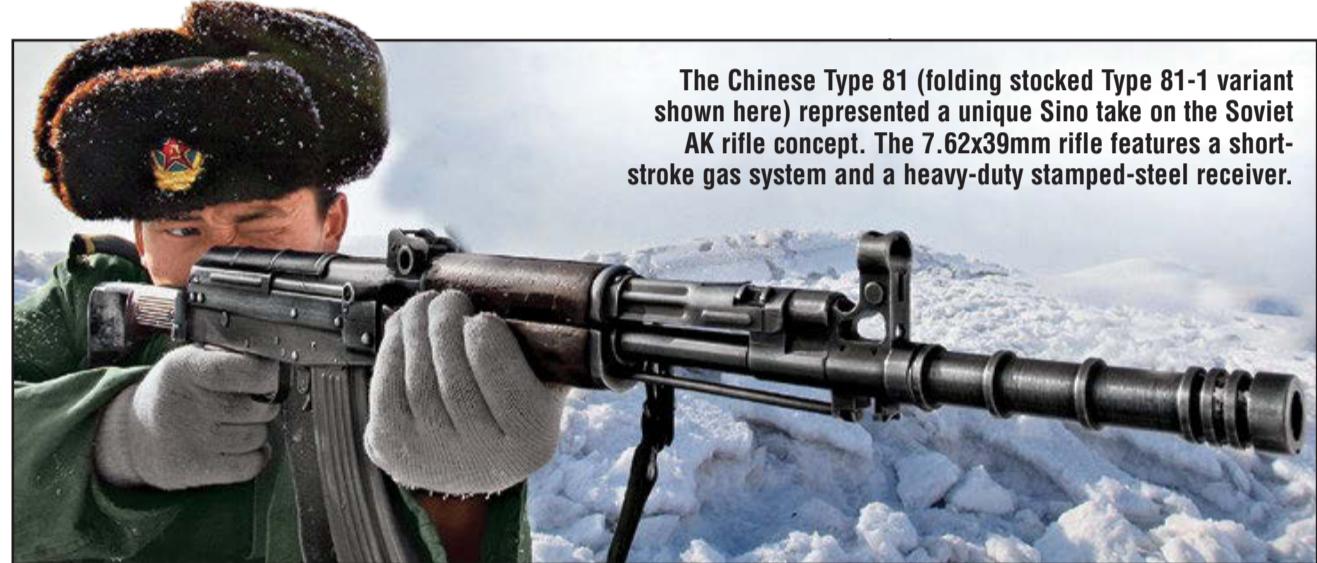
BY MAXIM POPENKER



During the early years of the post-WWII period, the newly established People's Republic of China (PRC) was a close "friend" to the Soviet Union, so it was natural for the country to adopt the weapons of a more advanced ally.

In 1956, the Chinese military adopted two Soviet designs, both carrying the same Type 56 designation and both being chambered for Soviet 7.62x39mm ammunition. One was the semi-automatic Simonov SKS carbine, the other was the AK-47 assault rifle. Both weapons were made in large numbers and used by the People's Liberation Army of China (PLA), as well as exported into various Third-World countries.

The Type 56 assault rifle, as initially adopted by the PLA, was an almost exact copy of the Soviet AK with a milled receiver. The only notable differences were the markings in Chinese, instead of Russian, and the folding, non-detachable, spike-shaped bayonets, which replaced the original detachable knife bayonets of Soviet origin. These two weapons were complemented by the 7.62x39mm Type 56 belt-fed light machine gun, which was nothing more but a license-built Degtyaryov RPD light machine gun, which was also of Soviet origin.



The Chinese Type 81 (folding stocked Type 81-1 variant shown here) represented a unique Sino take on the Soviet AK rifle concept. The 7.62x39mm rifle features a short-stroke gas system and a heavy-duty stamped-steel receiver.

Later on, following significant disagreements between the PRC and the USSR during the 1960s, China decided to develop its own small arms, based on the earlier designs. The first domestically designed and mass-produced assault rifle was the Type 63. As its name implies, it was initially adopted by the PLA in 1963. It is an interesting development because it represents a mix of features taken from other designs, mostly from the AK and the SKS. In particular, it combined an AK-style rotary bolt locking and detachable magazine feed with an SKS-type stock and a short-stroke gas piston. Like its predecessor, the Type 63 rifle fired 7.62x39mm ammunition of Soviet origin.

Being the first more or less indigenous weapon of Chinese design, the Type 63 rifle was not without certain flaws. Furthermore, combat

experience, gained by the PLA during the Sino-Vietnamese border conflicts of the late 1970s, suggested that the PLA was years behind the Vietnamese Army in terms of infantry armaments. Furthermore, available Type 56 assault rifles were found to be less accurate than desired.

As a result of these revelations, a new re-

search and development program was initiated in April of 1979. Using previous experimental weapons as a base for a new rifle, at least two design teams entered the competition. Apparently, the two competing designs were labelled as Type 81 and Type 82, both consisting of a basic infantry rifle and a light machine gun/squad automatic weapon, which was in-



SPECIFICATIONS

TYPE 81

CALIBER: 7.62x39mm • **BARREL:** 17.5 inches

OA LENGTH: 37.6 inches • **WEIGHT:** 7.5 pounds

STOCK: Wood • **SIGHTS:** Iron

ACTION: Gas-piston operated

FINISH: Parkerized • **CAPACITY:** 30+1, 75+1





Chinese People's Liberation Army unit on parade, displaying their Type 81-1 folding-stock rifles. Note the equipped bayonets on the weapons.

tended to replace old Type 56/ RPD machine guns.

The Type 81 design won the trials, and was approved for initial production in 1983. After extensive field trials, it was formally approved for mass production and general issue in 1986, as an interim measure until the development of the small-bore rifle system (which later became the 5.8x42mm Type 95) was completed.

Like many other interim

measures, the Type 81 small-arms family had a much longer service life than initially anticipated. In fact, it is still employed by PLA and People's Armed Police (PAP) troops across mainland China, being gradually replaced by the new 5.8mm Type 95 small-arms family.

Versatile Platform

The Type 81 was more than a single assault rifle—it was a family of infantry firearms, like the Soviet AKM/RPK family.

Type 81 weapons were made as an assault rifle with a fixed stock, an assault rifle with a folding stock (Type 81-1), and a heavy barrelled Type 81 Squad Automatic Weapon/light machine gun. The latter was fitted with a bipod and issued with 75-round drum magazines instead of the typical 30-round boxes.

It must be noted that the folding-stock Type 81-1 rifle, which was initially intended for paratroopers, later became the standard issue weapon for all troops. Despite being externally somewhat similar to the AK-47, it is significantly different from it; its most easily distinguishable

feature being an exposed part of the barrel, with the foresight moved back. This was done to be able to fire rifle grenades from the barrel. Type 81 rifles replaced most of the obsolescent Type 56 assault rifles and carbines, as well as Type 63 rifles, in most PLA units, and saw some action in border clashes between China and Vietnam during the late 1980s.

Compared to the Type 56/AK-47 rifles, the Type 81 has some prominent features. It uses a longer barrel and a more rigid receiver made of thicker sheet steel. It also features a lighter bolt group combined with a gas regulator, which allows for more smooth operation under normal conditions, resulting in increased accuracy in both single shots and automatic fire. It also has a bolt hold-open, though it requires special magazines that are not compatible with the





Chinese People's Liberation Army soldiers practicing with their folding-stock Type 81-1 rifles.
While externally similar to an AKM, the Type 81 series is mechanically and operationally distinct.

AK family. The safety selector is relocated to the left side and the sights also are different from the Type 56/AK-47.

The PLA was a major user of the Type 81 small-arms family, but apparently not the sole one. More than a few Type 81-1 rifles were issued to the ranks of Chinese armed police (PAP) forces. Export sales were made to Algeria, Burma and some other states, mostly in Southeast Asia and Africa.

The Chinese state-owned Norinco Corporation also produced semi-automatic-only versions of the Type 81 weapons for export to Western civilian markets. For a short time, semi-automatic Type 81 weapons, based on the Type 81-1 rifle and Type 81 LMG, were available to U.S. customers through ChinaSports Inc, trading out of Santa Fe Springs, California. Chambered to its "native" 7.62x39mm ammunition, these weapons were

similar to their military prototypes, except for the obvious inability to fire in full auto and less obvious safety arrangements on the Type 81S rifle.

For some reason, this



**“ THE TYPE 81
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RPK FAMILY. ”**

model had its safety located inside the triggerguard, while its Type 81MGS "heavy barrel" rifle and their military descendants had safety switches located on the left side of the receiver. U.S. importation of these weapons was eventually ceased. Norinco also manufactured a rare, 5.56mm (.223) caliber semi-automatic variant of the Type 81S rifle, known as EM-356. It is visually different from 7.62mm Type 81S rifle by having the gas block moved farther forward on the barrel, and using a 30-round stamped steel magazine, which was borrowed from the 5.56mm Type 88S (AK-74 clone) semi-automatic rifle, also offered by Norinco. Another peculiar feature of the export models was an additional type of folding stock. While military-issue Type 81 rifles featured either a fixed wooden stock or side-folding metallic stock, Type 81S rifles also were offered with an underfolding AKS-

type shoulder stock, in both 7.62mm and 5.56mm variants.

The latest variant of the Type 81 family of weapons is the 5.8mm Type 87 rifle. It is mechanically similar to Type 81-1, but it is adapted to new small-bore Chinese service ammunition, the 5.8x42mm DBP-87. Other visible changes include plastic furniture and an L-shaped side-folding shoulder stock, also covered with plastic. Produced in relatively small numbers, the Type 87 rifle was used as a test bed to refine 5.8mm ammunition prior to its full-scale adoption, along with the radically different Type 95 small-arms system, which consists of a rifle, carbine and a light machine gun, all based on the same bullpup layout with plastic body.

It appears that the Type 81 small-arms system is gradually being phased out of front-line PLA units, which now use 5.8mm Type 95 small-arms systems. However, the PAP

still possesses sizeable stocks of the Type 81 rifles, which are issued on regular basis, especially in more remote areas of the country. Also, semi-automatic conversions of the former military Type 81 and Type 81-1 rifles were displayed at IWA-2014 exhibition in Nuremberg, Germany. Apparently, Norinco obtained stocks of ex-military Type 81 weapons in serviceable condition and, after refurbishing and converting them to semi-automatic-only, plans to sell them to the European shooting public.

Gun Details

The Type 81 is a gas-operated, magazine-fed, select-fire weapon that fires from a closed bolt. It uses a short-stroke gas piston that's located above the barrel and a three-position gas regulator (two positions for firing in normal and harsh conditions, marked "1" and "2," and one marked "0" for launching rifle grenades). The bolt group features an AK-47-type rotating bolt that locks into the machined barrel trunnion, pinned to the stamped steel receiver. The barrel bore and

The sturdy and serviceable sights of the Type 81 are made up of a hooded front post and a shielded U-shaped notch rear unit.



bolt group are chrome-plated to ensure longer service life.

Type 81 rifles also feature a bolt hold-open, which catches the bolt in the open position after the last round has been fired from the magazine. There's no separate manual bolt release lever; it has to be released by pulling it slightly back from locked position and then releasing the handle. The safety selector switch is located at the left side of the receiver, just above the pistol grip, and can be easily operated with the right-hand thumb. Its settings, however,



are counter-intuitive for American shooters accustomed to AR-15/M16 type selectors. The Type 81's selector works clockwise from the three o'clock position, with its settings being "0" (safe), "2" (full auto) and "1" (semi-auto).

The gun's open sights are marked from 100 to 500 meters, with the protected post front sight being mounted just ahead of the gas block, leaving the front portion of the barrel free for the rifle grenade launcher. The rear sight has an unusual T-shaped aperture, with the small U-shaped notch at the bottom being used for actual aiming. Range adjustments are done by rotating knobs located on both sides of the rear sight base; the knobs are marked for range in hundreds of meters (from 100 to 500). Ammunition is fed from specially designed 20- and 30-round stamped steel magazines, or from 75-round drums intended for the Type 81 light machine gun. Twenty-round magazines are rare and believed to be a heritage of the previous Type 63 rifles.

The furniture (pistol grip and forend) is normally made of wood. The most common Type 81-1 rifles feature a side-folding shoulder stock, made from sheet steel stampings, and are fitted with

unusual plastic covers, which, apparently, are intended as a grip for a bayonet thrust that also can double as a rudimentary cheekrest, protecting the shooter's face from contact with bare steel. When not required, the shoulder stock folds forward and to the right.

The Type 81 light machine gun is essentially similar to Type 81 rifle, with certain modifications. Most importantly, it has a longer and heavier barrel, fitted with a permanently attached, folding bipod. The front sight base is mounted at the muzzle end of the barrel, allowing for a noticeably longer sight radius. The rear sight is graduated to 800 meters. It is fitted with



The Type-81 employs a proprietary magazine with an integrated bolt-hold-open system.

a fixed, wooden shoulder stock and a folding carry handle, located at the front of the receiver.

The Type 81 series of Chinese weapons shows a unique Sino take on Soviet-style weapon design, delivering a rifle design that is simultaneously idiosyncratic and familiar. No matter what though, the series has proven to be a tough and reliable domestic Chinese offering that has earned a reputation for performance.



Unlike the large dustcover-style safety of the AK, the Type-81's safety selector is a smaller lever located on the left side of the receiver.



ROUND-UP

MAGAZINES & DRUMS

BY ROBERT A. SADOWSKI

The AK-47 design virtually tripled the firepower of the SKS carbine it replaced. The SKS had a capacity of 10 rounds that were loaded via a stripper clip into the SKS's internal magazine. The AK-47 was originally designed to use a stamped steel, 30-round magazine that offered more firepower and faster reloads. As the AK design evolved, magazines were enhanced. Polymer magazine bodies offered lighter weights and resistance to denting and corrosion. Drum magazines further increased firepower, typically offering a 75-round capacity. Here is a look at the latest variety of AK magazines and drums, ranging from newly manufactured steel and polymer variants to battle-tested military surplus.

ARSENAL
BULGARIAN
M-47W



ATLANTIC
FIREARMS
IZHMASH
MAGAZINES



ARMS OF AMERICA
AK-74 DRUM





CENTURY
ROMANIAN
AK DRUM



CAA POLYMER
MAGAZINE



GIBBS MATRA
MAGAZINE

ARMS OF AMERICA AK-74 DRUM

New from Arms of America is a drum magazine system for 5.45x39mm-chambered, AK-74-pattern rifles. It is a dual-snail configuration and features a 95-round capacity. The body is made of heavy-duty polymer and features clear round-count windows. The drum is designed to work with all AK-74-style rifles that can accept double-column magazines. The system comes with a carrying pack and loading tool. (armsofamerica.com; 888-729-7815)

ARSENAL BULGARIAN M-47W

The Bulgarian Circle 10 magazines have a reputation for reliability. The 30-round M-47W magazine is designed for 7.62x39mm ammunition and uses a waffle-patterned polymer body. The textured waffle pattern provides operators a good grip for fast reloads without hanging up in a magazine pouch. The polymer construction offers less weight than typical military surplus steel magazines. The feed lips are steel, as are the locking tabs. (arsenalinc.com; 702-643-2220)

IZHMASH MAGAZINES FROM ATLANTIC FIREARMS

Atlantic Firearms has high-quality 7.62x39mm 30-round magazines from the famous Izhmash factory in Russia. These are rare military surplus magazines that rate at "very good" to "excellent" condition. Many still have the factory ink stamp. Molded from an orange-colored Bakelite polymer, these magazines have a steel floorplate. Renowned for their reliability, they are also lightweight and are as much collectible as they are serviceable. (atlanticfirearms.com; 410-352-5183)

CAA POLYMER MAGAZINE

Command Arms Accessories (CAA) has released a new 30-round magazine available for AK- or Saiga-pattern rifles. The magazines feature tough polymer bodies and are available with or without clear round-count windows that correspond to markers at the 10-, 20- and 30-round positions. To ensure reliable feeding in any environment, the magazines sport corrosion-resistant steel springs and non-tilt followers. (commandarms.com; 215-949-9944)

CENTURY ROMANIAN AK DRUM

These Romanian 7.62x39mm military surplus drum magazines from Century Arms have a 75-round capacity and are compatible with all 7.62x39mm AK-style rifles and pistols that accept high-capacity magazines. The drums are in good condition. The rear cover flips open on a hinge so it won't get lost. The drum weighs 2.25 pounds unloaded and 5.05 pounds loaded. Completely constructed from steel, the drum is rugged and built to withstand abuse. (centuryarms.com; 800-527-1252)

GIBBS MATRA MAGAZINE

Manufactured in the Balkans to tough mil-spec standards, the new Gibbs Matra Magazine is a 30-round, all-steel AK magazine ready for duty. It features ribbed walls and a useful bolt-hold-open follower that locks the action of the rifle open when the magazine runs dry. Each magazine comes with an unlimited five-year warranty. (gibbsrifle.com; 304-274-0004)



MAGAZINES & DRUMS



K-VAR M-47W40

The M-47W40 magazine from K-Var has a 40-round capacity and is constructed from molded polymer with steel inserts. The front edge of the magazine features a steel insert that provides the front locking lug on the magazine and offers rigidity to the magazine. The feed lips are also made of steel as well as the rear locking lug. The outside of the magazine has a waffled texture for rigidity and a sure grip. (k-var.com; 702-364-8880)

PMAG 30AK/AKM

Magpul makes a modern, high-tech 30-round 7.62x39mm magazine with an impact- and crush-resistant polymer body. The ribbed outside texture gives users a sure grip during mag changes. An anti-tilt, self-lubricating, low-friction follower increases reliability and smooth feeding, as does the constant-curve design and the stainless steel spring. The magazine will work in Kalashnikov-type rifles like the AK-47, AKM, AKMS and others. (magpul.com; 303-828-3460)

PROMAG AK-A16

The AK-A16 drum magazine holds 73 rounds of 7.62x39mm ammunition, giving the AK-47, MAK 90 and other AK variants serious firepower. The drum is molded from ProMag's proprietary Technopolymer over steel feed ramps for rugged reliability and high-volume performance. The internal tensioner allows the drum to be stored loaded for extended periods while still ensuring reliability. The rear plate is hinged for easy loading. (promagindustries.com; 800-438-2547)

SGM TACTICAL VEPR 12 GAUGE

Feed the machine with the 12-round Vepr 12 gauge shotgun magazine. Molded from a composite glass-filled polymer, the Vepr 12 magazine is extremely durable. The slick and low-friction interior of the magazine body allows for reliable feeding. SGM also makes the springs slightly longer to provide better pressure to the follower. (sgmtactical.com; 865-980-0510)

TAPCO INTRAFUSE MAGAZINE

When you want a lighter, smaller magazine, TAPCO offers the INTRAFUSE 20-round AK-47 magazine. This 7.62x39mm magazine delivers with its rugged glass-filled nylon construction. A heavy-duty spring with an anti-tilt follower helps to ensure reliability and smooth feeding. Color choices include dark earth and black. Other variants available in 5-, 10- and 30-round capacities. (tapco.com; 800-554-1445)

TAPCO SMOOTH SIDE MAGAZINE

The TAPCO Smooth Side/Low Drag 30-round magazine allows an operator to more easily pull a magazine from a pouch with less friction for a more confident reload. Less friction, more speed. The magazine's reinforced composite material also prevents corrosion. The heavy-duty spring and anti-tilt follower means enhanced reliability. Finish choices include dark earth, orange and black. (tapco.com; 800-554-1445)

US PALM AK30-10

If 10 rounds are the maximum capacity allowed in your state, the US PALM AK30-10 is ideal for you. It looks like a standard 30-round model, but is permanently blocked internally to hold only 10 rounds. The result is a magazine that looks "right" in your rifle, while still adhering to local gun laws. The magazine is molded in one piece with a low-friction, semi-floating follower. (uspalm.com; 602-281-2940)



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TO USE A STAMPED
STEEL, 30-ROUND
MAGAZINE THAT OFFERED
MORE FIREPOWER AND
FASTER RELOADS.”



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They knew that my spirit would be wounded. They said I would be lonely and that I would find no comfort in family, friends, elders or spirits. I would be cut off from both beauty and pain...and I would need healing in all of these things.

-Nez Perce Warrior
on PTSD



SOVIET SPEC-OPS PISTOLS



Suppressed covert pistols built to give the Red Army the edge in the Cold War!



BY MAXIM POPENKER

The Soviet Army and NKVD (internal affairs) officers began to use suppressed weapons during World War II. Those weapons included the Mosin 1891/30 rifle and Nagant M1895 revolver, both fitted with a Maxim-type quick-detachable suppressor known as *Pribor Bramit*, or the Bramit device. The 1891/30 rifles were used with special subsonic ammunition, often handloaded by troops. This process involved disassembling the standard round, removing most of the powder charge and filling the empty space with some inert filler.

Suppressed Nagant revolvers were most often used with special ammunition loaded to standard velocities

(which happened to be subsonic), but loaded with a pointed bullet that ensured longer service life of the rubber baffle used in the Bramit silencer.

For some period after WWII, suppressed weaponry disappeared from the Soviet military scene, as the military minds were mostly occupied with nuclear bombs and missiles. However, the appearance of NATO's tactical nuclear missiles in Europe brought to life the idea of "missile killers"—elite stealth units capable of infiltrating enemy territories to strike at missile launchers, control posts and ammunition dumps at "zero hour." Obviously, such troops, known as *Voiska Spetsialnogo*



MSP pistol with barrels opened up for reloading, and two SP-3 rounds in special clip.

tion in Russia and is used by various army and police special-operations units.

What was more important to our story is that there was another customer for highly specialized small arms within the Soviet "power" system—the almighty Committee for State Security, or KGB. Among other things, the KGB was deeply engaged in espionage and counterespionage operations across the world, with many undercover agents looking for Western secrets while trying to keep Soviet secrets from their Western rivals. This game, obviously, was quite dangerous, and undercover agents sometimes were required to protect themselves with lethal force while maintaining maximum stealth.

Naznachenija, or Spetsnaz for short, required some special weapons to operate in stealth mode, and suppressed pistols were on the top of their shopping list.

Spec-Ops Hardware

The integrally suppressed *Pistolet Beschumnyj* (PB) was introduced in 1967 for use by various Spetsnaz units. Manufacture of PB pistols, however, was halted in the mid-1980s, but resumed about 15 years later due to constant demand for such specialized weapons. It was based on the standard issue Makarov PM pistol, fitted with a modified slide, return spring and a semi-detachable suppressor of more or less conventional design. The PB pistol fires standard issue 9x18 PM ammunition. It is still in produc-



Ammo for Soviet spec-ops pistols, L to R: 9x18mm Makarov, 7.62x63mm PZ (complete round and fired case with piston extending out of the mouth), 7.62x37mm SP-3 (complete round and fired case with extended 2-piece piston), and 7.62x40mm SP-4 (complete round, fired case and fired bullet).

Covert Combat

The father of the current breed of covert weapons in Soviet service was Igor Stechkin, designer of the famous APS machine pistol. During the mid-1950s, the KGB requested that he create a deep-concealment



unassembled 7.62mm pistol (7.62x25mm) bullets and fitted it with an aluminum core that extended back from the jacket to rest on the piston.

Behind Enemy Lines

The following part of these weapons' history is very dim at its best, but what is known is that around 1965 the KGB, as well as its most important rival within the Soviet intelligence system, the Intelligence Department of the General Staff of the Soviet Army, or GRU, both adopted the "noiseless pistol complex," which consisted

(Left) Operator of the Russian Police Spetsnaz unit practicing with PSS pistol. (Below) Operator showing the loading process of the PSS from empty with slide locked back.



weapon that could be disguised as something that looks completely safe and fire poison-tipped bullets without any noise or flash. To achieve the latter effect, Stechkin employed the rather old principle of capturing hot powder gases (the prime source of the sound and flash during the discharge) within the confined space of the specially designed cartridge case.

The first noiseless cartridge developed by Stechkin was designated *Spetsialnyj Patron 1* (Special Cartridge Model 1, or SP-1). It was based on a 9x18 case and loaded with a special bullet and a small piston that was located between the bullet base and powder charge. The bullet had the front part of a 7.62mm cartridge, with the

base being of 9mm dimensions, and it was intended to be fired through a squeeze-bored barrel with a decreased-caliber muzzle. Essentially, the bullet base was squeezed to 7.62mm dimensions and then free to exit the bore while the piston was jammed into the bore, capturing powder gases inside the barrel.

Of course, this system was to be used only in manually loaded, single-shot weapons. One such weapon (recently declassified) was made to imitate a tin cigarette case, with three 9mm/7.62mm barrels and a firing mechanism fitted inside.

The SP-1 cartridge never went past the prototype stage, but within several years Stechkin designed his next internally silenced cartridge, known as

the SP-2. This one also contained a small powder charge behind the piston, but this time the powder gases were to be captured inside the bottle-necked cartridge case, which looked somewhat similar to that of the 7.62x39mm M43 round. Since the pusher piston was relatively short and was seated deep in the cartridge case before discharge, the bullet had to be made long but relatively light. To achieve this, Stechkin used metal jackets taken from

of the integrally suppressed 7.62mm cartridge, known as *Patron Zmeya* (PZ), and the two-barreled, derringer-type pistol known as S4.

The PZ ammunition, which was the heart of the system, consisted of the machined, 63mm-long steel case with a screw-in base. It featured a tapered inner bore with single-stage pusher piston inserted from the rear. A small amount of special propellant was loaded behind the piston, and the base



was securely screwed in to form an airtight, variable-volume container for powder gases. The cartridge base itself was a complicated subassembly, as it contained a standard primer, a small firing pin behind it and a screw-in bushing to keep the primer and pin in the base under the pressure of powder gases.

The projectile was inserted from the front. It was a standard 7.62mm pointed bullet, as used in 7.62x39 M43 ammunition, used with the possible intent to fool any post-incident investigators and make them search for a sniper who fired an AK

or SKS rifle from a stand-off distance, rather than look for a secret agent that shot the target from almost point-blank range.

Muzzle velocity was about 557 feet per second (fps), and resulting muzzle energy was about 84 foot-pounds. Over time, the PZ cartridge evolved through several minor variations before arriving at its definitive version, known as PZAM. It is believed that this weapon complex saw at least some use in the hands of the GRU Spetsnaz during the Soviet incursion into Afghanistan. And, in modified form (S4M pistol and PZAM ammunition), it still can

be found in the armories of certain highly specialized units within the Russian military and internal affairs ministry.

Enhanced Design

While more or less effective in use, the S4 series apparently still left something to be desired, especially from the point of view of the plainclothes agents of the KGB and GRU. Both the pistol and its ammunition were too heavy and bulky for their intended use, and during the late 1960s Igor Stechkin returned to the drawing board with the intent to design a more compact weapon of comparable performance. He started with ammunition.

The limiting factors in size and weight of the internally suppressed ammunition are the strength of the case (which has to withstand high pressures without bursting) and the length of the piston, which takes space between the bullet and the powder load. The case-strength issue was apparently solved through the use of a special, reduced-power propellant and by allowing the case to be fire-formed at the neck by the moving piston when fired. The piston's length was also decreased through the adoption of a two-part, telescoping piston.

Of course, the two-part piston is more complicated and thus expensive to make, but during the Soviet era, the KGB budget was never short for new toys. In fact, it is possible that this new cartridge was still less expensive than the PZ series due to the use of a single-piece, drawn steel case with a conventional primer instead of the multi-part machined steel case of the PZ series.

The load for the new round was the same M43 bullet, weighing 122 grains, but the muzzle velocity dropped to about 475 fps, resulting in

muzzle energy of only 61 foot-pounds—about half that of .32 ACP ammunition. This performance may look quite marginal at its best, but one must remember that this ammunition used relatively heavy-pointed bullets, which provided better penetration than lighter, blunt-nosed pistol bullets. It's also worth noting that this gun was to be used by highly trained personnel who knew where to put each bullet for maximum effect.

With the new SP-3 ammunition in hand, Stechkin and his team at the Tula arms factory then developed another derringer-type, break-action pistol with two barrels. It was adopted by the KGB and Soviet military in 1972 as the *Malogabaritnyj Spetsialnyj Pistole* (MSP), and it still remains in limited service with elite units in Russian law enforcement and anti-terrorism units.

Maximum Effect

While the MSP was close to ideal for KGB purposes, it still left a lot to be desired from the military's point of view, especially in terms of ammunition capacity. Therefore, in the late 1970s, a requirement was set by the Soviet Army to develop a multi-shot, self-loading, compact weapon that would fire internally silenced ammunition. The problem, however, was that existing "noiseless" ammunition was either overly bulky (as in the case of the 7.62x63mm PZAM cartridge) or badly suited to self-loading applications (as with the 7.62x37mm SP-3, which had a protruding telescoping piston and a case that expanded at the neck during discharge). Therefore, the work commenced with development of the new ammunition, which was better suited for self-loading applications.

Since the users of the proposed weapon were intended to

SPECIFICATIONS

PB

CALIBER: 9x18 PM

LENGTH: 12.2 inches
(with suppressor)

WEIGHT: 34.2 ounces

ACTION: Double-action

CAPACITY: 8



S4M

CALIBER: 7.62x63mm PZAM

LENGTH: 5.7 inches

WEIGHT: 21.1 ounces

ACTION: Single-action

CAPACITY: 2



MSP

CALIBER: 7.62x37mm SP-3

LENGTH: 3.9 inches

WEIGHT: 18.6 ounces

ACTION: Single-action

CAPACITY: 2



PSS

CALIBER: 7.62x40mm SP-4

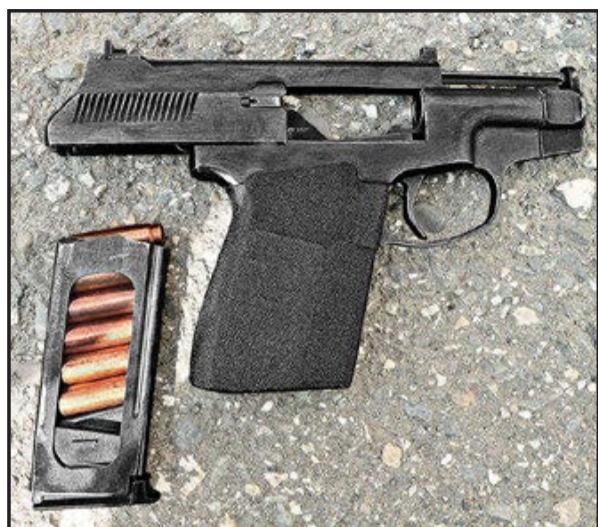
LENGTH: 6.6 inches

WEIGHT: 29.9 ounces

ACTION: Double-action

CAPACITY: 6





PSS pistol locked open, with fully loaded mag removed.

a standard steel military helmet at 25 yards and still have sufficient killing power to disable the helmet's owner. The new cartridge, designated as *Spetsialnyj Patron*

operate in circumstances where foreign criminal investigations of its results would be irrelevant, it was decided to use a specialized bullet—one optimized for penetration and stopping power at relatively low velocities.

The new cartridge featured a flat-point, cylindrical bullet 35mm long that was made of mild steel with a brass driving band at the front. When fired, this bullet is said to penetrate

4 (SP-4), employed a bottle-necked case 42mm long with a short neck. When loaded, the bullet is fully seated in the case, with its flat tip being flush with the case mouth. Below the bullet there's a short steel piston that separates the powder charge and the bullet.

The piston's diameter is larger than that of the cartridge mouth/bullet diameter, so when the powder charge is

fired, the piston jams itself in the cartridge mouth, sealing powder gases inside the case. Like its predecessor, the SP-4 cartridge uses standard primers that are securely crimped in the base. SP-4 propels its 143-grain bullet at 655 fps at the muzzle, resulting in 137 foot-pounds of energy.

With new ammunition on hands, designers at TSNII TochMash commenced the development of a new semi-automatic pistol to fire it. It took about three years to design and refine the unusual and unique firearm, which was adopted in 1982 as *Pistolet Samozaryadnyj Spetsialnyj* (PSS). It was quite compact, being even shorter than a standard Makarov PM pistol, and featured a conventional six-round, detachable box magazine that greatly increased firepower when compared to earlier two-

barreled, noiseless pistols.

The PSS used a simple blowback action and a Makarov PM-type, double-action trigger with an external hammer and manual safety/decocker. This pistol was soon issued to military Spetsnaz units that were to operate behind enemy lines and to specialized KGB units, such as the famous anti-terrorist unit "A" (better known as "Alpha" group).

Today, the PSS can be found in the armories of various SWAT-type units across Russia that are engaged in operations against terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking. Originally top-secret equipment, today it is widely known among Russian gun enthusiasts and professionals alike, and offered for export to qualified foreign government buyers through a Russian state arms export agency. ★

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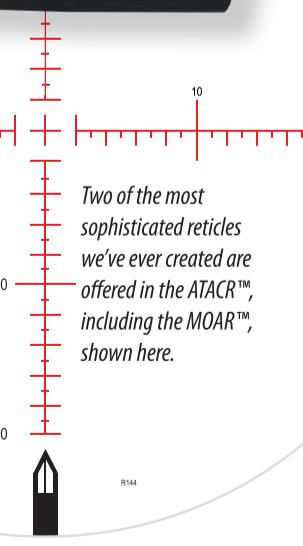


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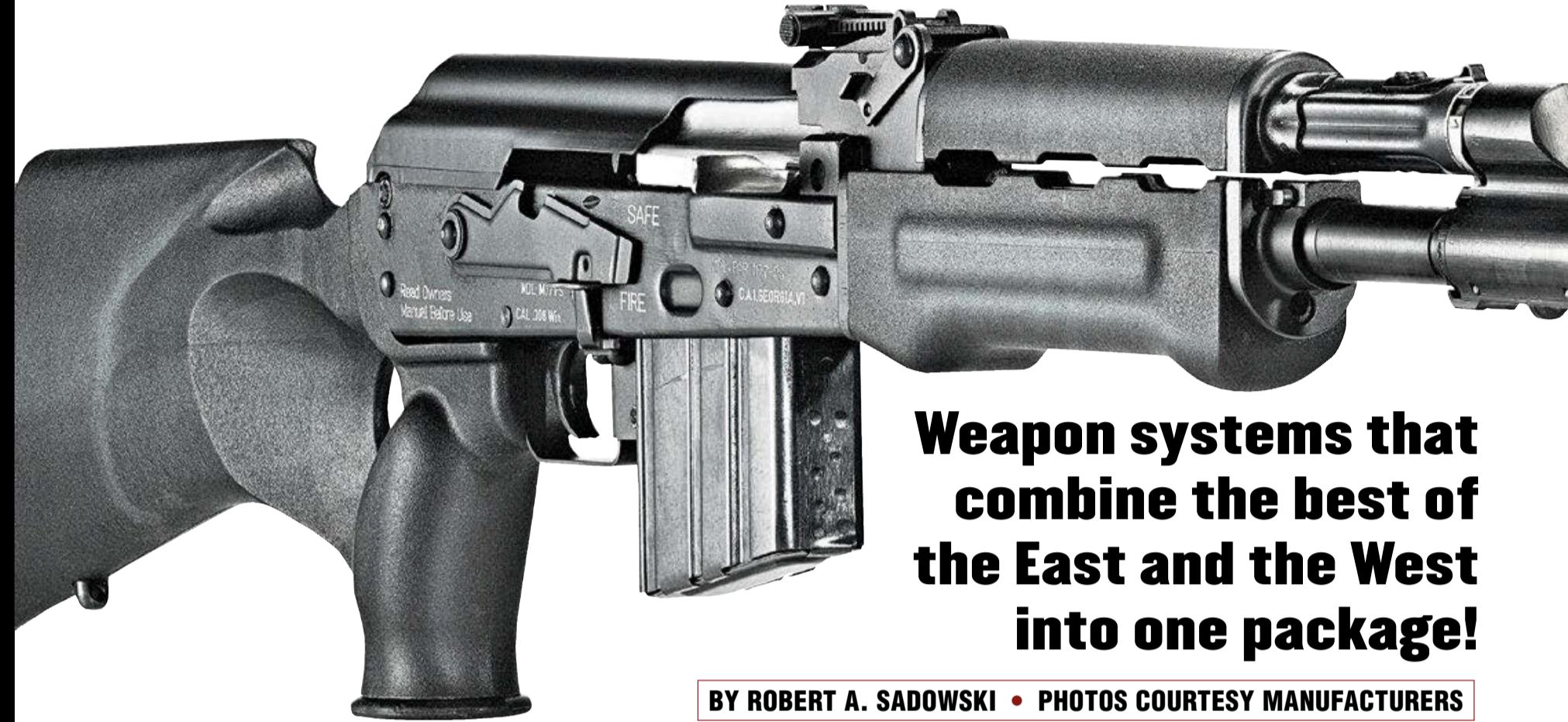
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HYBRID WARRIORS



Weapon systems that combine the best of the East and the West into one package!

BY ROBERT A. SADOWSKI • PHOTOS COURTESY MANUFACTURERS

Consider this a unique take on East/West détente in the post-Cold War era. While the 7.62x39mm (and later 5.45x39mm) Kalashnikov series of weapons represented the Soviet side during this simmering conflict, the M14 in .308/7.62x51mm and the M16 in .223/5.56x45mm characterized the West's. However, a new era blurring the lines between the weapons and cartridges of the East and the West is emerging. Today, you can have an AK chambered in .308 and an AR chambered in 5.45mm, as well as newly created designs that combine elements of both weapon platforms. Read on to see 10 of the most interesting examples of this new movement in firearm design that is benefitting today's shooting enthusiasts.

Century Arms N-PAP M77 LO-CAP

What could be a more Western cartridge than the .308, or more Eastern than the AK rifle? The N-PAP M77 LO-CAP is built in the famed Zastava factory in Serbia and uses the classic AK design with a classic American caliber. The gas system is adjustable to allow the rifle to fire a variety of ammunition. The barrel is cold-hammer-forged for increased accuracy and all key internal components are milled from steel. The rifle comes with one 10-round magazine and a side-mount rail to attach optics. (centuryarms.com; 800-527-1252)

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .308/7.62x51mm
BARREL: 19.7 inches
OA LENGTH: 40.6 inches
WEIGHT: 8.6 pounds
STOCK: Fixed thumbhole
SIGHTS: Adjustable front and rear
ACTION: Gas piston, semi-auto
FINISH: Matte black
CAPACITY: 10+1
MSRP: \$650

CMMG Mk47 Mutant AKM

The Mk47 Mutant is a hybridization of the AK and AR designs that creates an all-new rifle platform. The lower is manufactured from 7075-T6 billet aluminum and is designed to accept all standard AK magazines with its standard ambidextrous magazine catch system. The upper uses a bolt carrier group derived from a .308-based AR bolt carrier. The 16.1-inch, free-floated barrel has a 1-in-10-inch twist, and the entire system runs on a carbine-length direct impingement gas system. A full-length Picatinny rail runs along the top, making the Mk47 optics ready.

The weight of the rifle is a minimal 7.2 pounds. The trigger assembly, handguard, grip, buffer tube assembly, buttstock and gas system are fully compatible with mil-spec AR-15s.

(cmmginc.com; 660-248-2293)

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: 7.62x39mm • **BARREL:** 16.1 inches

OA LENGTH: 33.5 inches • **WEIGHT:** 7.2 pounds

STOCK: Magpul CTR • **SIGHTS:** Optics ready

ACTION: Direct impingement, semi-auto

FINISH: Matte black • **CAPACITY:** 30+1 • **MSRP:** \$1,649



Faxon ARAK-21 XRS

The ARAK-21 XRS is a true hybrid that combines AR design features—modular lower and upper receivers—with the AK's long-stroke piston operating system. The ARAK-21 upper mates to any mil-spec AR lower. The monolithic upper uses a long-stroke piston system with a four-position valve, allowing variable settings including single shot. The operating system also features dual recoil springs and a dust cover. The ambidextrous charging handle folds and is non-reciprocating. The ARAK-21 XRS comes with two barrels for fast barrel/caliber changes, including 5.56mm and 300 Blackout.

(faxonfirearms.com; 513-674-2580)

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: 5.56mm, 300 BLK, 7.62x39mm

BARREL: 12.5-20 inches

OA LENGTH: 33-40.5 inches

WEIGHT: 7.6 pounds

STOCK: Six-position

SIGHTS: Optics ready

ACTION: Gas piston, semi-auto

FINISH: Matte black, FDE, OD

CAPACITY: 30+1 • **MSRP:** \$1,899-2,409



Huldra Arms Mark IV 5.45x39mm Carbine

This AR hybrid, chambered in 5.45x39mm, features an operating system that uses a patented gas piston that allows the carbine to run cooler and cleaner than the typical gas-impingement system. The chrome-moly/vanadium barrel has a 1-in-8-inch twist rate, an M4 profile and employs M4-style feed ramps. Accuracy is claimed to be 1 MOA at 100 meters. The Mark IV comes with an M4-style handguard and is optics ready through its flattop upper and gas block. (huldraarms.com; 218-829-3521)



SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: 5.45x39mm

BARREL: 16 inches

OA LENGTH: 32.3-35.6 inches

WEIGHT: 6.18 pounds

STOCK: Six-position

SIGHTS: Optics ready

ACTION: Gas piston, semi-auto

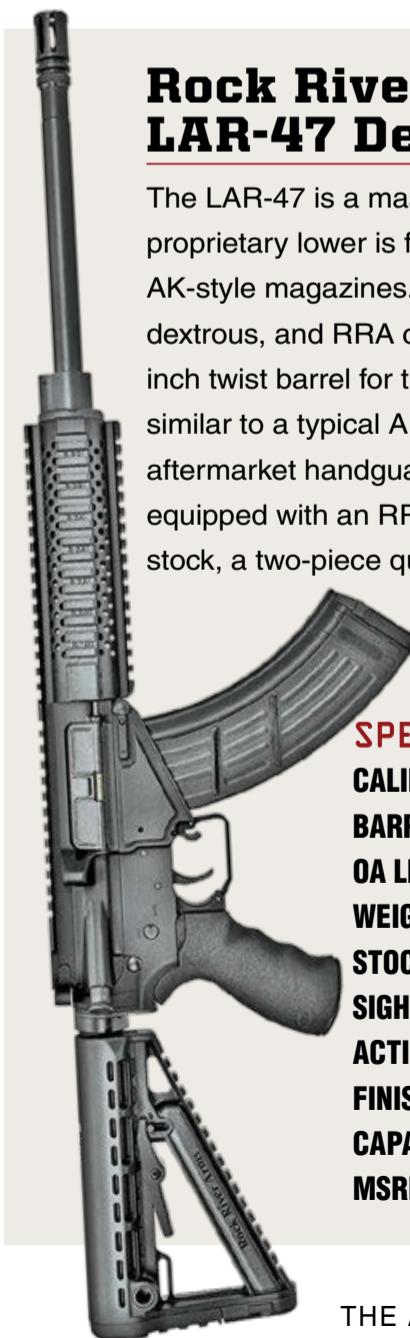
FINISH: Matte black

CAPACITY: 30+1

MSRP: \$1,015

Rock River Arms LAR-47 Delta Carbine

The LAR-47 is a mash-up of an AK and AR. The proprietary lower is forged and designed to accept AK-style magazines. The magazine release is ambidextrous, and RRA chose to use a 16-inch, 1-in-10-inch twist barrel for the LAR-47. The forged upper is similar to a typical AR-15, allowing users to use aftermarket handguards. The LAR-47 comes equipped with an RRA Six-Position Delta CAR buttstock, a two-piece quad rail and an Ergo SureGrip pistol grip. (rockriverarms.com; 309-792-5780)



SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: 7.62x39mm

BARREL: 16 inches

OA LENGTH: 36.5 inches

WEIGHT: 7.8 pounds

STOCK: RRA Six-position Delta CAR

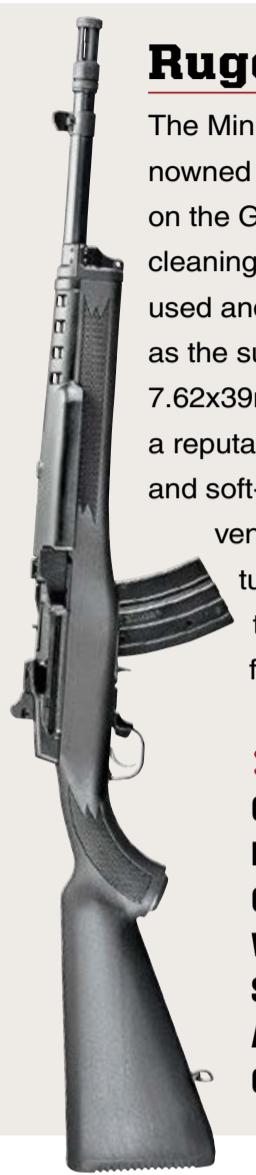
SIGHTS: Optics ready

ACTION: Direct impingement, semi-auto

FINISH: Matte black

CAPACITY: 30+1

MSRP: \$1,545



Ruger Mini Thirty

The Mini-Thirty Tactical is based off Ruger's renowned .223 Mini-14 action, which itself is based on the Garand's breech locking system with a self-cleaning piston. The operating system has been used and abused for decades, and it is as reliable as the sun rising in the morning. Chambered in the 7.62x39mm cartridge, the Mini-Thirty has earned a reputation as a maneuverable, quick-handling and soft-recoiling rifle with ballistics similar to the venerable .30-30 Win. The Mini-Thirty features a 16.12-inch barrel with a 1-in-10-inch twist rate. The muzzle is capped with a flash suppressor. (ruger.com)

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: 7.62x39mm
BARREL: 16.12 inches
OA LENGTH: 36.75 inches
WEIGHT: 6.75 pounds • **STOCK:** Synthetic
SIGHTS: Ghost ring rear, post front
ACTION: Gas piston, semi-auto • **FINISH:** Blued
CAPACITY: 20+1 • **MSRP:** \$989



RWC Saiga IZ109T

The Saiga IZ109T shotgun is legendary for its ability to produce a withering rate of fire. This AK uses the battle-proven AK operating system and juices it up by chambering it in 12 gauge. The gas port and block are enlarged for reliability with all loads. Their proprietary muzzle brake is permanently attached to the muzzle and helps tame recoil. The ventilated synthetic handguard helps improve heat reduction as well as lightens the weapon. The buttstock and pistol grip are both from CAA while a soft recoil pad and cheekrest help absorb felt recoil. (rwcgroupllc.com; 215-949-9944)

SPECIFICATIONS

GAUGE: 12 • **BARREL:** 18.25 inches
OA LENGTH: 40 inches • **WEIGHT:** 8.36 pounds
STOCK: CAA 6-Position Collapsible Skeletonized
SIGHTS: Adjustable front and rear
ACTION: Gas piston, semi-auto
FINISH: Matte black
CAPACITY: 10+1 • **MSRP:** \$1,239

RWC Saiga IZ132

The Saiga IZ132 is a wolf in sheep's clothing. Under the traditional straight-checkered synthetic buttstock and forearm is a purebred, Russian-manufactured AK chambered in the traditional 7.62mm cartridge. The ergonomic operating handle makes charging the rifle effortless, and the controls operate smoothly and efficiently. Iron sights come standard as does a 10-round magazine. These are some of the last true Saiga rifles in the U.S. since the importation ban was imposed in 2014. (rwcgroupllc.com; 215-949-9944)



SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: 7.62x39mm • **BARREL:** 16.3 inches
OA LENGTH: 43.5 inches
WEIGHT: 7.9 pounds (empty)
STOCK: Polymer
SIGHTS: Adjustable rear, post front
ACTION: Gas piston, semi-auto
FINISH: Matte black
CAPACITY: 10+1 • **MSRP:** \$719

Sig Sauer SIG556R

The SIG556 is the civilian version of the renowned, Swiss-designed SG 550 series combat rifle with its gas-piston operating system and rotating bolt. The SIG556R—the “R” is for Russian—takes the rifle’s reputation for performance, accuracy and durability and adds the 7.62x39mm cartridge. The 16-inch barrel features a 1-in-9.5-inch twist rate and four-groove rifling. The gas valve is adjustable to suit different types of ammunition. AK-style magazines are compatible with the SIG556R, yet it retains the Swiss folding stock, allowing the rifle to go from 35.9 inches with stock extended to 26 inches folded. (sigmayer.com; 603-610-3000)



SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: 7.62x39mm • **BARREL:** 16 inches
OA LENGTH: 26-35.9 inches
WEIGHT: 7 pounds • **STOCK:** Polymer, folding
SIGHTS: Optics ready
ACTION: Gas piston, semi-auto • **FINISH:** Matte black
CAPACITY: 30+1 • **MSRP:** \$1,332

★★★★★



Windham Weaponry 7.62x39mm SRC

The visual clue that the Windham Weaponry 7.62x39mm SRC is not an ordinary AR-15 is the distinct curve of the rifle's 30-round magazine. It looks like an AK magazine, and it and the rifle are designed to operate with the 7.62x39mm Russian cartridge. The barrel is manufactured from 4150 chrome-moly/vanadium 11595E steel and uses a 1-in-9.5-inch right-hand twist. The forged upper and lower receivers are pure mil-spec, as is the enhanced bolt, which was designed for use with the 7.62x39mm and is made of Carpenter 158 steel per U.S. mil-spec requirements. (windhamweaponry.com; 855-808-1888)

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: 7.62x39mm • **BARREL:** 16 inches
OA LENGTH: 32.3-36.1 inches
WEIGHT: 6.15 pounds
STOCK: M4, six-position
SIGHTS: Optics ready
ACTION: Direct impingement, semi-auto
FINISH: Matte black
CAPACITY: 30+1 • **MSRP:** \$1,056

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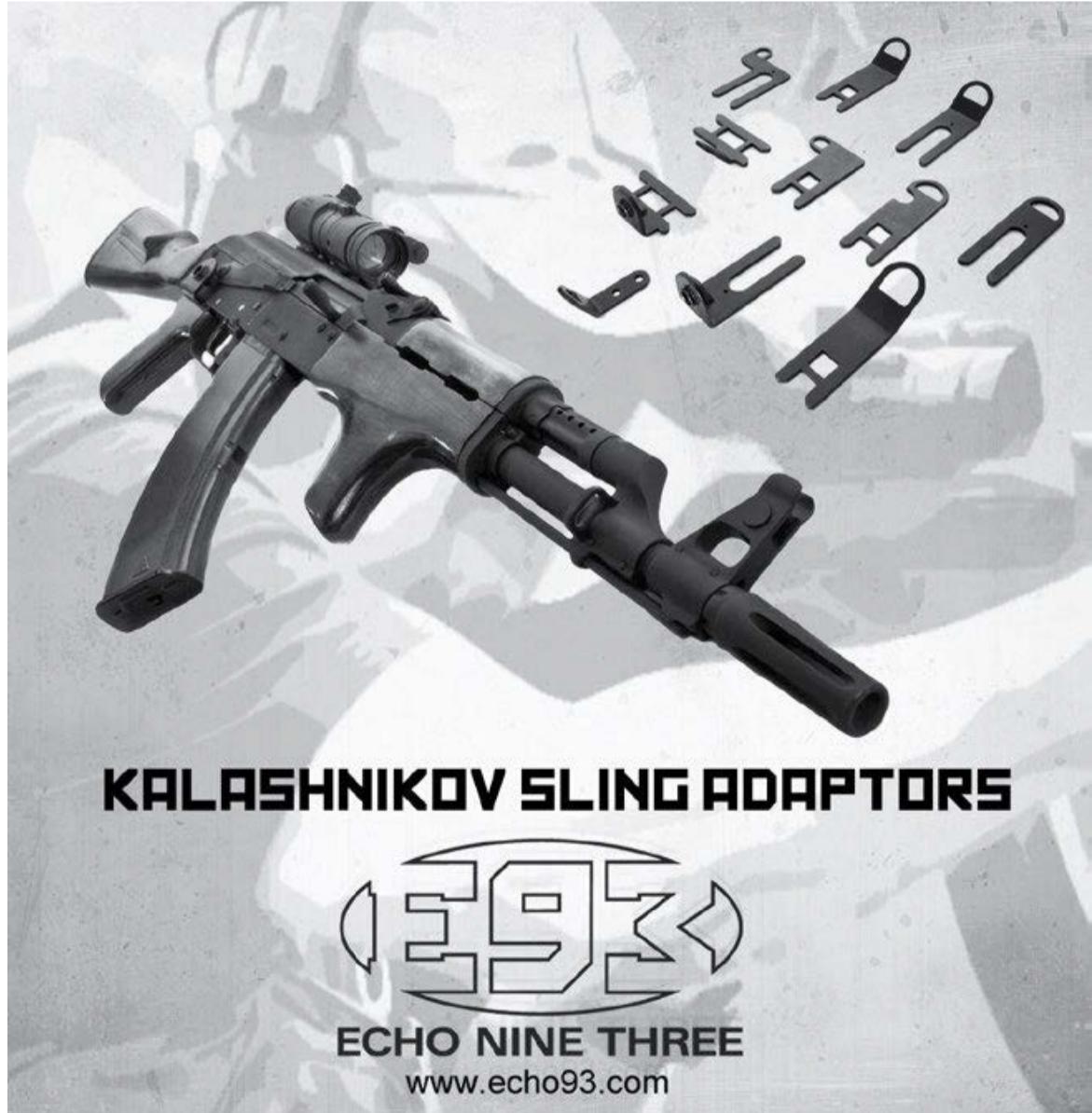
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BY DR. MARTIN D. TOPPER • PHOTOS BY SEAN UTLEY



The AK-47 is something of an enigma.

It's the world's most common tactical rifle even though its controls aren't user-friendly. The AK's magazine release is hard to operate when wearing gloves, "rocking and locking" its magazines takes practice, the gun's safety is often stiff and its trigger can be just this side of atrocious. On the other hand, the AK is very reliable and its 7.62x39mm cartridge is a lot more effective against cover than the 5.56mm NATO. Marc Krebs of Krebs Custom Guns specializes in making the AK platform user-friendly, and his new "Speedload 2" (SL 2) rifle solves many of the AK's problems and makes it a compact tactical rifle that is both easy to operate and fully-reliable.

Marc is a trained gunsmith who has been building custom firearms for the last 30 years. His current shop is located in Wauconda, Illinois, which is north of Chicago. Marc began specializing in customizing 1911s, and later began building high-quality AK-47s based on Saiga receivers from Izhmash. Marc builds the rifles to Russian qual-

The Krebs Speedload 2 is a tactical rifle, pure and simple. (Inset) The spring-loaded mag release on the Krebs ejects empty mags clear of the rifle.



ity standards and then adds his own parts to produce unique rifles that have good tactical accuracy and are very reliable.

Higher Standard

When the Krebs SL 2 arrived for me at the Florida Gun Exchange, it attracted positive comments from the moment I removed it from its lockable black polymer case. Its precise fitting, clean lines and even matte black finish clearly indicate that its design and quality are definitely a cut above many other AKs. But this gun's beauty isn't just skin deep. It has a number of Krebs' custom features that definitely enhance its tactical utility. Some of these features are optional on Krebs rifles. While some can be purchased separately and installed by a gunsmith, others are specific to the SL 2.

Standard Krebs aftermarket parts used on the SL 2 include a permanently attached, four-prong flash suppressor, a KeyMod UKFM forend and an Mk VI enhanced safety. In addition,

the rifle has a Magpul pistol grip and magazine, a Krebs-modified TAPCO trigger set, a Vltor buttstock adapter and a Magpul CTR buttstock. Features specific to the Speedload 2 include a 14.5-inch barrel (measuring 16.25 inches with the permanently attached flash suppressor), a rounded, right-side operating handle, a left-side operating handle, a new magazine well indexing flange and an extended magazine release lever and magazine ejection spring. All of these features combine to make the Speedload 2 very easy to operate.

The SL 2 is quick to get on target and easy to keep ready. Its short, 0.311-inch-bored barrel and collapsible stock allow it to handle well when clearing or defending tight interior spaces like small rooms and hallways, even when wearing thick body armor. The KeyMod forend makes the gun lighter than it would be if it were equipped with a quad rail. This keeps the gun's weight down to 7.5 pounds with an empty magazine and makes it less muzzle heavy than guns with rails.



(Above) The keymod forend is lighter than a traditional quad rail and offers just as much area to mount accessories. (Left) Note the permanently-attached four-prong flash suppressor.



The Krebs-modified TAPCO trigger set provides a smooth, six-pound trigger pull and the rifle has a Krebs Mk VI enhanced safety.



The left-side charging handle makes it possible to charge the rifle without removing the shooting hand from the rifle's pistol grip.

SPECIFICATIONS

KREBS CUSTOM SPEEDLOAD 2

CALIBER: 7.62x39mm
BARREL: 16.25 inches
OA LENGTH: 34-36 inches
WEIGHT: 7.5 pounds
GRIP: Magpul pistol grip
SIGHTS: Iron
ACTION: Semi-auto
FINISH: Matte black
CAPACITY: 30+1
MSRP: N/A



A gun that's a bit muzzle-heavy helps control muzzle rise, but one that has too much weight forward can be difficult to hold steady for precise bullet placement. This rifle is just right. The top of the handguard does have a Picatinny rail. This is important because it allowed me to place my EOTech sight far enough forward to elevate the muzzle enough to maintain a good cheekweld while looking through the sight with both eyes open. It is extremely fast to get on target. Of course, the rifle also has standard, low-mounted AK iron sights. They don't co-witness with the EOTech, but the EOTech's quick-release mount makes it very easy to dismount the sight and drop it in your coat pocket or backpack.

The SL 2's size and weight make it handy, but its redesigned Krebs magazine well and customized operating controls make it very easy to operate, even when wearing gloves. The rifle draws its name from its new, lighter magazine well indexing flange, which makes it easy to line up the magazine for rapid reloading.

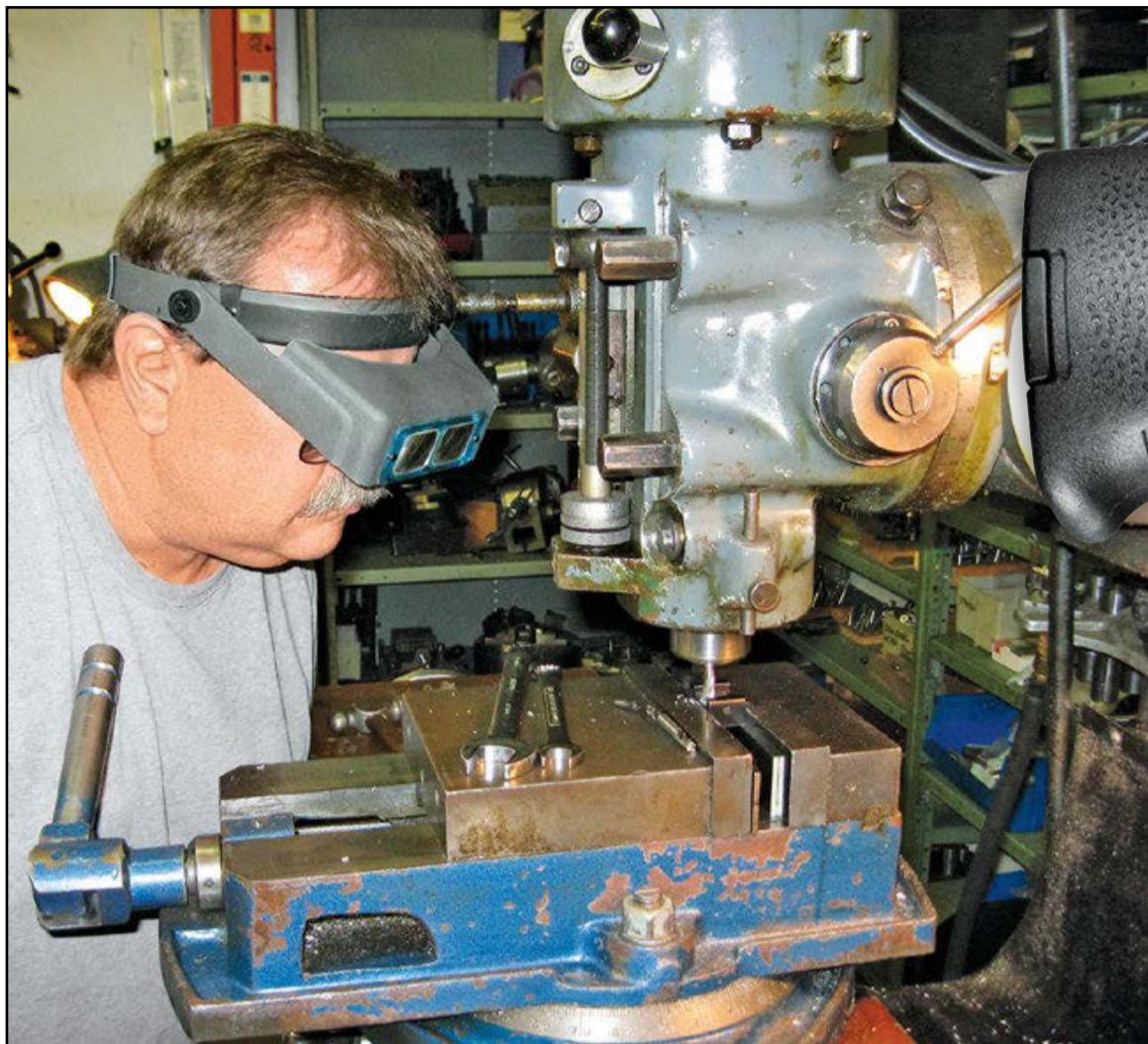
Extended Release

One of the problems with operating traditional AK-47s is getting a magazine lined up so it can be "rocked and locked" into

place. This skill can be difficult to perform when the shooter is under stress and his/her fine motor coordination degrades due to large amounts of adrenalin into the blood-stream. To help, the new magazine well is spring-loaded. When the magazine release lever is pushed forward, the magazine is ejected clear of the rifle, making it unlikely that the operator will need to manually rock it forward and out of the gun.

The flange is not the only improvement. The right-side bolt operating handle has been rounded to fit the hand better. In addition, the SL 2 has a bolt operating handle on the left side of the receiver. Both bolt handles reciprocate, which prevents the use of the traditional AK scope rail on the left side of the receiver. This is not much of a problem, since the top rail on the rifle's forend is large enough to mount a long eye-relief scope, if desired.

Other operating controls that enhance the usability of the SL 2 include a Krebs-modified TAPCO trigger set that provides a smooth, 6-pound trigger pull. In addition, the rifle has a Krebs Mk VI enhanced safety, which is much smoother to operate than the standard AK safety. The safety lever has a notch on its upper edge that allows the lever to be used to lock the bolt handle back.



Mark Krebs has been a custom gunsmith for over 30 years and today he produces some of America's best custom AK rifles.

The SL 2 also has a Krebs extended magazine release. Both the magazine release and safety can be operated by the trigger finger while the shooting hand remains firmly on the rifle's pistol grip. Combined with the left-side bolt handle, these two features make it possible to operate all the SL 2's controls without removing the shooting hand from the pistol grip.

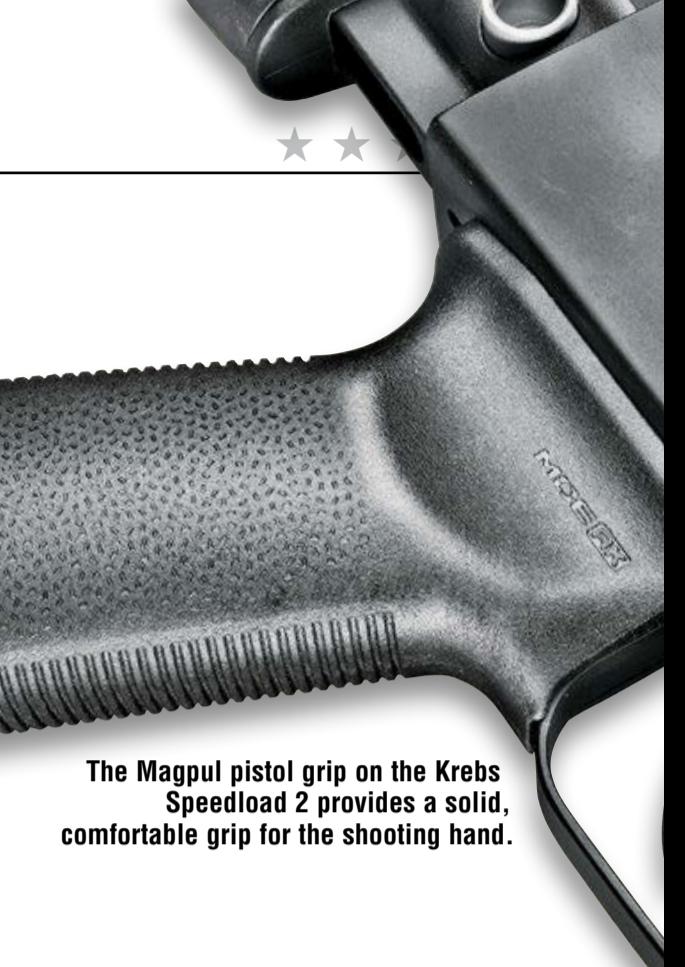
Shots Fired

The SL 2 was tested at the Volusia County Gun & Hunt Club and Flagler Gun and Archery Club with three types of ammunition. These included Federal's 123-grain SP, Fiocchi's 123-grain FMJ and Wolf's Steel-Case 123-grain FMJ. Tests were conducted using an EOTech EXPS2 holographic weapon sight with a 1-MOA dot. Accuracy was measured at 100 yards and the Wolf ammo was also used to engage a silhouette target at 200 yards. Velocity was measured with a Shooting Chrony chronograph. Finally, a house-entry CQB drill was conducted to determine the SL 2's handling in close quarters and from cover.

Accuracy results clearly indicated that the SL 2 was capable of good tactical accuracy when used with Wolf's mil-spec, 123-grain, steel-cased FMJ, which is the

load for which it was designed. It performed acceptably with the brass-cased Federal and Fiocchi loads at 100 yards, but the average groups shot by the steel-cased Wolf ammo were 33-percent tighter. Groups would have been tighter if I had used a scope, but an intended use of the SL2 would be in the shorter CQB-type ranges and distances, a place where a scope can be more of a hindrance than a help.

On the other hand, even a rifle designed around a CQB-engagement concept may



The Magpul pistol grip on the Krebs Speedload 2 provides a solid, comfortable grip for the shooting hand.

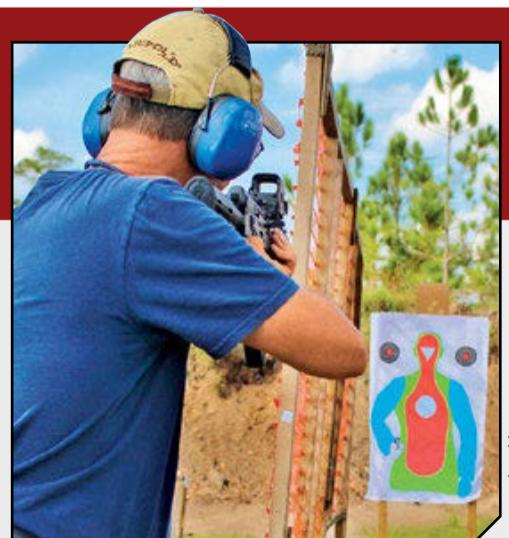


“ ITS PRECISE FITTING, CLEAN LINES AND EVEN MATTE BLACK FINISH CLEARLY INDICATE THAT ITS DESIGN AND QUALITY ARE DEFINITELY A CUT ABOVE MANY OTHER AKs. ”

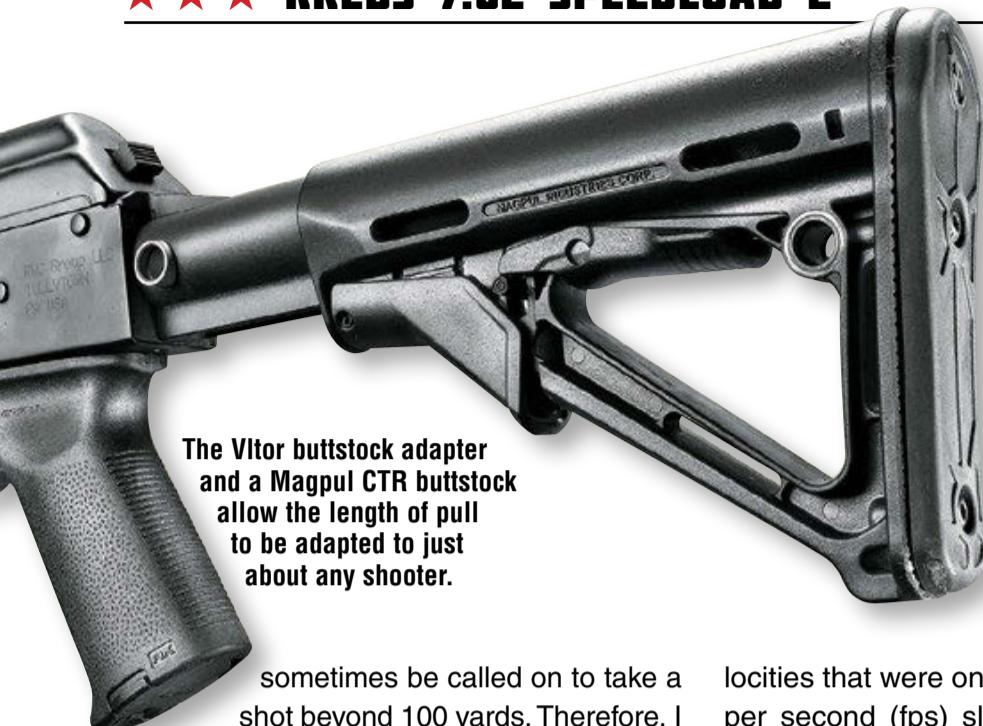
PERFORMANCE KREBS CUSTOM SPEEDLOAD 2 7.62x39MM

Load	Velocity	Accuracy
Federal 123 JSP	2,250	4.70
Fiocchi 123 FMJA	2,387	4.85
Wolf 123 FMJ	2,317	3.05

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps, and accuracy in inches for 5-shot groups fired at 100 yards.



Martin D. Topper photo



The Vltor buttstock adapter and a Magpul CTR buttstock allow the length of pull to be adapted to just about any shooter.

sometimes be called on to take a shot beyond 100 yards. Therefore, I set out a silhouette target at 200 yards to see what the SL 2, EOTech and Wolf ammo could do. I aimed at the upper portion and five consecutive shots from the bench struck the target. Four were in the center mass and one landed slightly to the left, clearly indicating that the Speedload 2 and EOTech could successfully engage threats at a reasonable urban standoff distance.

Velocities were very good despite the SL 2's short barrel. All loads produced ve-

locities that were only between 50-100 feet per second (fps) slower than factory test barrels. Energy levels were between 1,382 to 1,508 foot-pounds.

CQB Drill

For the CQB drill, I borrowed a range setup for a practical shooting match at the Volusia Club. Part of the stage involved a room-clearing exercise in which threat targets were set up at 4, 6 and 15 yards. It was a simple drill. Take out the target that's visible when approaching the door-

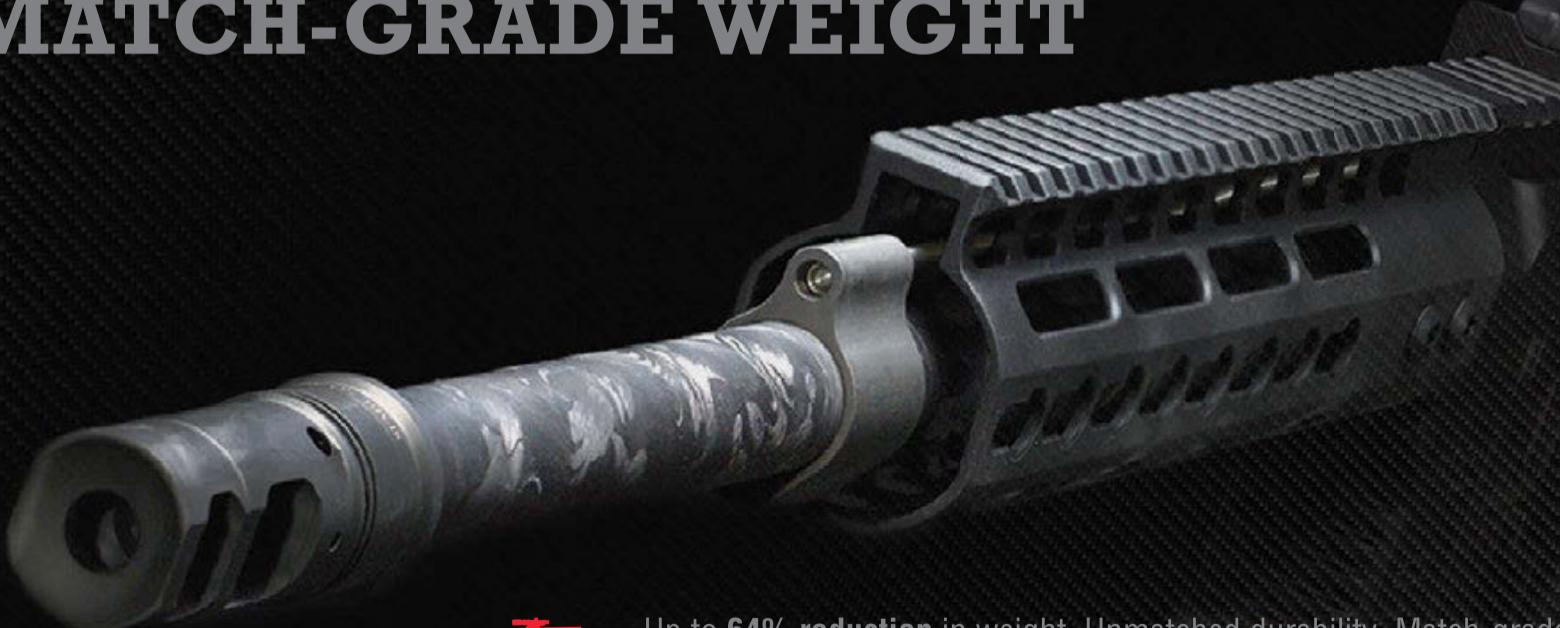
way; swing left and take out the second target as you pass the wall before entering, and then step through the doorway; swing right and take the target at 15 yards as it comes into view. All rounds quickly found their mark. There were no stoppages or failures to fire.

The Krebs SL 2 is a tactical rifle, pure and simple. As AKs go, it's good looking, but its real beauty is its ruggedness and the simplicity and efficiency with which it gets the job done. For more information, visit krebscustom.com or call 847-487-7776. ★



The Speedload 2's rugged Soviet-style iron sights are a reassuring backup in the event that an optical sight fails.

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Up to **64% reduction** in weight. Unmatched durability. Match-grade accuracy. The match-grade carbon-fiber barrel is a reality. Go to proofresearch.com.



● Vltor Basic IMOD Stock \$94.95

● BCM® Diamondhead Folding Rear Sight \$119.00

● Aimpoint Micro H-1 \$617.00

● ADM AD-B2 Base \$65.95

● ADM T1 SOCOM Spacer \$19.95

● Centurion Arms C4 Rail 12 Inch \$314.00

● BCM® Diamondhead Folding Front Sight \$99.00

● BCMGUNFIGHTER™ Grip Mod 0 \$29.95

● ALG Defense QMS Trigger \$45.00

● TangoDown SCAR Panel 6 Inch \$13.70

● Thorntail Offset Adaptive Light Mount \$50.00

● BCMGUNFIGHTER™ Compensator Mod 1 \$94.95

● B5 Systems SOPMOD Bravo Stock \$58.00

● ALG Defense QMS Trigger \$45.00

● TangoDown Short QD Vertical Grip \$89.73

● Geissele SSA Trigger \$210

● BCMGUNFIGHTER™ A2X Flash Suppressor \$34.95

● CTT Solutions Mag Cap

● Inforce HSP WML \$119.00

● Blue Force Gear VCAS Sling \$45.00

● Trijicon TA31RCO-M4 \$1,422.05

● GDI R-COM B-Model Mount \$205.00

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● BCM® KMR-10 KeyMod Rail 10 Inch \$254.95

● BCMGUNFIGHTER™ Vertical Grip \$49.95

● Midwest Industries SSK-KeyMod 12 Inch Free Float Handguard

● SureFire X300 Ultra LED WeaponLight

● Midwest Industries Folding Front Sight \$79.95

● EOTech XPS2-0 HWS \$499.00

● EOTech G33 STS Magnifier \$549.00

● Midwest Industries SPLP Rear Sight \$119.95

● BattleComp 1.0 \$149.99

● BCM® KMR-13 KeyMod Rail 13 Inch \$269.95

● IWC KeyMod QD RL Sling Mount \$17.00

● ALG Defense ACT Trigger \$65.00

● TangoDown PR-4 Rear Sling Mount \$73.65

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● BCMGUNFIGHTER™ Buttstock

● PWS FSC556 Tactical Compensator \$98.95

● PWS KeyMod Bipod Adapter \$23.95

● Wilson Combat Tactical Trigger Unit \$269.95

● BCMGUNFIGHTER™ Grip Mod 3 \$17.95

● Geissele Super Modular KeyMod 13 Inch Rail MK4 \$350

● Daniel Defense AR15 Lite 7.0 Rail \$219.00

● BCMGUNFIGHTER™ Grip Mod 2 \$29.95

● Vltor Carbine EMOD Stock \$119.65

● Aimpoint PRO Patrol Rifle Optic \$416.00

● TangoDown BattleGrip \$35.75



HELMETS OF THE DDR



Warsaw Pact relics designed for the evolving East German military after WWII.



BY PETER SUCIU

Throughout the Cold War it was typically said that the army of the *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* (DDR), or East Germany, was probably the best trained and best equipped of the Warsaw Pact powers, including those of the Soviet Union!

The country was also ironically held as the most reliable yet least trusted by their Soviet masters, thanks to the bitter reminders of World War II.

While Soviet equipment was used by the various Warsaw Pact powers in the years that followed the end of World War II, by the 1950s the various Communist nations began to have their own identities. This was also most true of East Germany.

The history of the East German helmets actually goes back to WWII when, as early as 1942, the German

Army was looking at ways of simplifying its production methods and producing superior weapons. The world's first assault rifle, the StG-44, is proof that you could have it both ways!

At the same time this held true of helmets, as the Model 1935 German "Stahlhelm" still remains a well-designed helmet that more than got the job done. However, it was expensive and complex to produce, and it was far from perfect.

During the war there were several designs that were tested to replace the iconic German WWII helmet. Among these was one known as the "Thale B/II," which was one of three patterns that was produced at the Reich's Chemical and Technical Institute. Rumors persist that Adolf Hitler didn't like the helmet and it went nowhere.

According to noted author

and helmet historian Ludwig Baer, in his book *History of the German Steel Helmet: 1916-1945*, "In the autumn of 1944 they [the helmets] were presented to the Führer's Headquarters. In spite of favorable results of these helmets and their economization of both materials and labor time, the introduction of the helmet was rejected, evidently because the existing helmet was to remain the symbol of the 'Greater German Freedom Struggle.'"

Whether any of the prototypes were used in combat is unknown, and it is unknown if any even exist today. While

some such helmets do surface on eBay and from other sources, with the sellers claiming these are the elusive "Model B/II," any of these should be viewed with some skepticism. However, the Thale B/II was des-



The iconic Model 1956 East German helmet was in widespread use at the Berlin Wall during the Cold War.

The Model 1956 East German helmet is an unique design with distinctive slopes and curves. Note the variety of nets and covers that were employed on it.





Image courtesy of Maxim Popenker.

A DDR soldier is shown here firing what appears to be a MPi-KM 7.62x39mm rifle that is equipped with an active night sight optic. He is wearing a Model 56-pattern East German helmet.

tined to have life after Hitler in post-war East Germany.

The People's Police

By the time East Germany was declared an independent state in 1949 the Soviets had already created an armed branch of the People's Police, or *Volkspolizei* (VOPO). This actually served as the forerunners of the NVA (*Nationale Volksarmee*). Interestingly, the East German military forces retained a distinctly Wehrmacht-style uniform, but at first wore a Soviet SSh-40, making for a rather eclectic and almost anachronistic soldier. It is believed that both actual Soviet-made SSh-40 and Czech M-53 helmets were issued to the VOPO, and these featured a unique East German decal on the front. This model, with the decal, is highly sought after by collectors and is considered somewhat rare. As a result, these helmets are of course being faked.

As the East Germans began to establish a unique identity of their own, this included a modernized version of the uniform and helmet. The first true East German helmet was the Model 1954, which in appearance is somewhat similar to the German M-35 but is considerably squarer in shape. These helmets were never used by the NVA, but were in fact only used by the border police and VOPO forces. While not a true "East German Army" helmet, these are also fairly rare and desirable among collectors. Because of the complexity in producing steel helmets there have not been copies made—yet.

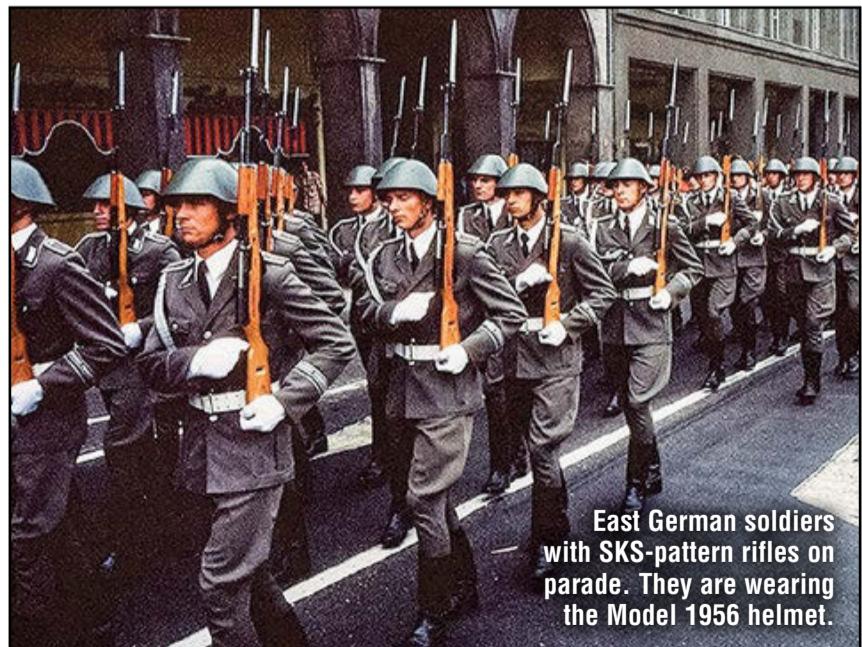
The helmet is all the more rare because it was soon replaced by the Model 1956, which is today the most recognizable helmet from the DDR. It is in fact based on the Model B/II, and thus features a more rounded/sloped shape than the WWII-era Model 1935 helmet.

This sloped design provided improved ballistic properties but also made for a handsome outline. The first model of the helmet featured the late-war Model 1944 liner system, which was designed to replace the M-31 liner that had been used with the German Model 35 and subsequent wartime helmets. The very first batch of helmets also used a single M-31-style chin-

strap, but this was replaced by the Y-straps that were seen with each subsequent model. There are several variations of the M-56, and the most common is the final version with the six leather tongues and foam padding. This particular example is officially known as the Model 56/70, as it has the 1970-era liner upgrade.

It is also worth noting that a "fantasy" version of the liner and chinstrap system was purported to have existed, but this is likely the result of what I believe is mistaken information that was presented in the book *Stahlhelm* (published in 1971). It describes a helmet liner with four thin leather pads, cork lining and rubber blocks. However, this author has never seen an example in person or in photograph to match that description. No doubt these four pads were confused with the Soviet SSh-68 liner system. As few East German helmets were likely encountered in the West in the 1970s, that work may have relied on the little information that was available at the time.

During the Cold War, East German helmets were both rare and highly sought after, but soon fell in price when the Berlin Wall came down. As



East German soldiers with SKS-pattern rifles on parade. They are wearing the Model 1956 helmet.



Members of the East German VOPO (People's Police) wearing the short-lived Model 1954 helmet, which featured the basic outline of the World War II era German "stahlhelm."

with most East German items, which had been sought after because of their ultimate rarity in the West, the helmets became a fixture at army surplus stores. Recently, however, the early models with the M-44 liner system and those with original decals are desired by collectors and have steadily increased in price. Collectors should note that while the liners haven't been faked (yet),

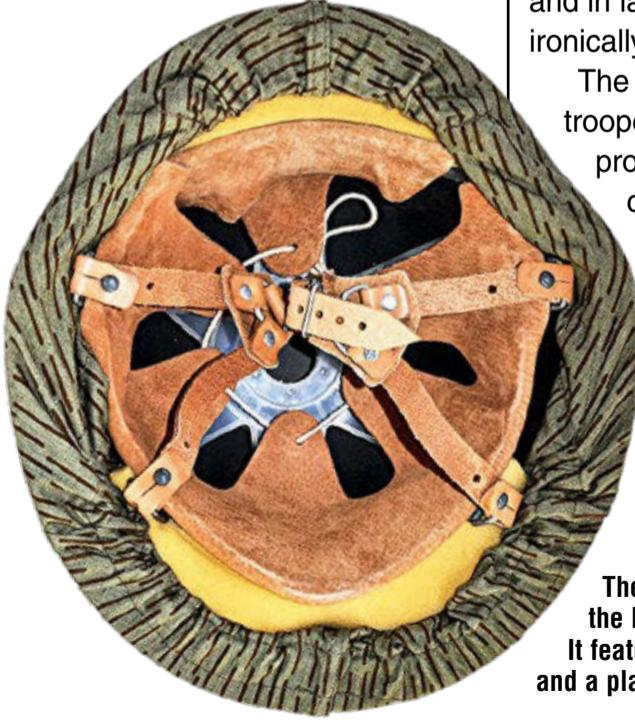
many fake and fantasy decals have been created, including for units such as the Stasi that never used such decals or even the helmets!

Warsaw's Influence

There is one other steel helmet that was used by the East German military and that was the paratrooper model. Its origins are somewhat complicated, if not exactly complex, and in fact the helmets are, ironically, of Polish origin.

The Polish Wz. 63 paratrooper helmet was widely produced for use in countries throughout the Warsaw Pact and became the de facto standard for several countries, including East Germany. What is notable about this particular pattern is that it is

The final liner pattern in the Model 1956/70 helmet. It featured foam padding and a plastic liner pad.



similar to a similar Polish Army motorcycle dispatch rider helmet, which was also in use from the 1960s to the 1980s. It was developed as a paratrooper model in early 1962 and introduced a year later as the Wz. 63. It featured an oval shell with two vent holes on each side and a padded rim that ran completely around the helmet. The tongued liner system appears to be an evolution of the German M-31 liner system, which could be part of the basis of confusion that these were originally of German origin.

While the Wz. 63 was in fact produced in East Germany, it isn't known in how great of numbers or whether East German models were ever supplied to other Warsaw Pact nations. It is widely held that the East German models may be darker in green than those of Polish origin, but it is a fact that is only confused because while some helmets are marked as being made

in East Germany, there is a theory that those stamps may have been added after the Berlin Wall came down.

Throughout the 1990s, tens of thousands of helmets were bought at surplus and made available in catalogs such as the now defunct Sovietski Collection, where the helmets were offered as "East German Paratrooper Helmets." Whether this was an honest mistake, given that examples may have likely come from the former East Germany and many with stamps that proclaimed an East German origin, or if it was just a way of building on the cache is not clear.

Finally, it should be noted that throughout the Cold War, communism promised to be the great equalizer and the various Warsaw Pact countries produced similar equipment without violating trademark. In some cases, items were simply produced to create uniformity among their forces, a goal that is also ever present in communism and one that can make it difficult for collectors today. For more information on currently available DDR surplus equipment, visit Coleman's Military Surplus at colemans.com or call 888-478-7758. ★



“ DURING THE COLD WAR, EAST GERMAN HELMETS WERE ... HIGHLY SOUGHT AFTER, BUT SOON FELL IN PRICE WHEN THE BERLIN WALL CAME DOWN. ”

EAST GERMANY'S KK-MPi 69



Rimfire trainer variant of a classic Cold War Kalashnikov!

Among collectors there are some interesting questions about the weapons used by the former DDR (*Deutsche Demokratische Republik*), aka East Germany. One that I've heard often is, what happened to all of the East German SKS rifles? Examples are quite hard to find. Another question relates to the small number of rimfire KK-MPi 69 parts kits that entered the U.S.—certainly only a few parts kits ever came in. I read one source that states the number is 15 kits, while another reports 75. Whatever the case, it certainly was not many.

What is interesting about the KK-MPi 69 is that it is a .22 caliber training rifle with select-fire capability. MPi stands for *Maschinenpistole*, KK stands for *Kleinkaliber* (small caliber), and 69 indicates the weapon's year of adoption. Designed to be similar in handling and ergonomics to the East German version of the AK, the KK-MPi 69 allowed training in both marksmanship and tactics on indoor ranges or on ranges not normally suited to use of full-metal-jacket 7.62x39mm rounds.

Produced at the VEB vehicle and rifle factory in Suhl, the KK-MPi 69 is a blowback design that fires the .22 LR round in semi- or full-auto. As a blowback, the rifle does not have a gas block, gas tube or upper handguard. The breech bolt is a steel casting with a claw extractor and free-floating firing pin. The MPi 69 uses a curved magazine of typical AK design, but with a single-stack 15-round .22-caliber magazine inside, which allowed magazine change drills to be done with standard mag pouches and thus as realistically as possible. Only a couple of parts were actually interchangeable with those of true DDR AKs. There also seems to have been at least a limited number of KK-MPi 69s with the folding paratrooper-type stock.

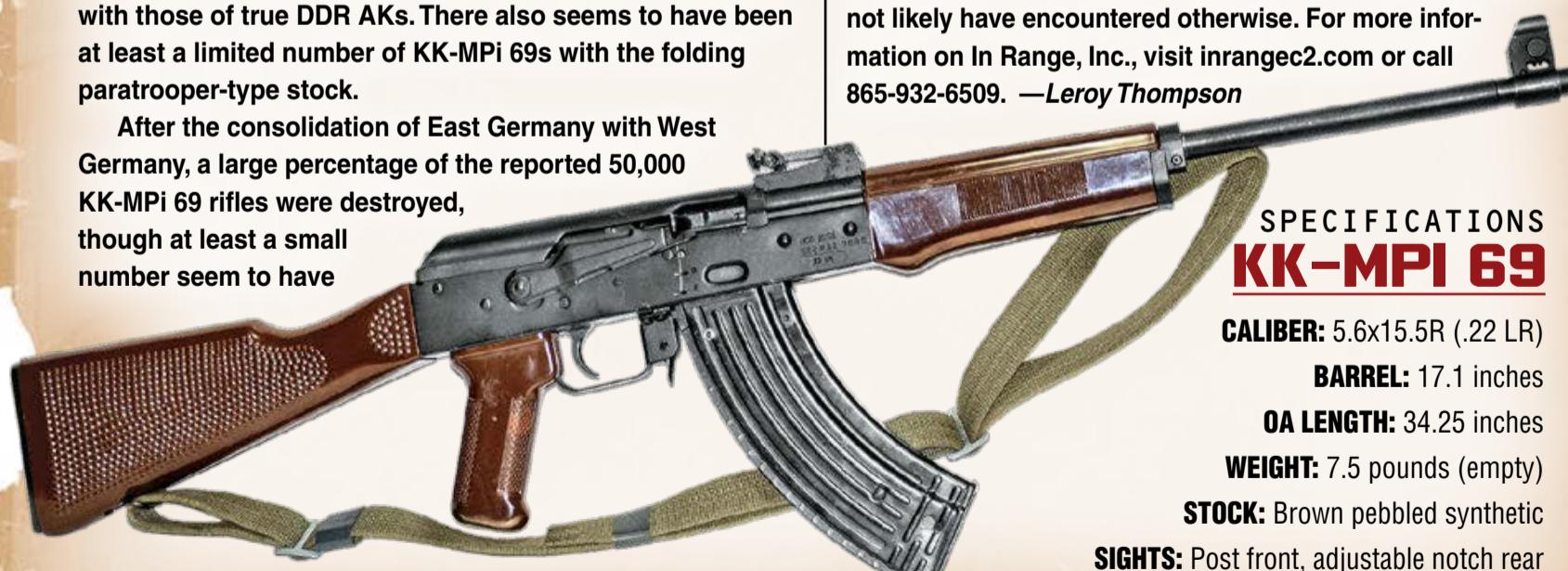
After the consolidation of East Germany with West Germany, a large percentage of the reported 50,000 KK-MPi 69 rifles were destroyed, though at least a small number seem to have

made it to Switzerland. Some appear to have been sold to the German equivalent of Class III dealers, as I found one for sale on a German website as an important German historical weapon. I'm not sure if the few parts kits that came into the U.S. were via Switzerland or not. Ironically, magazines for the KK-MPi 69 have been widely sold in the U.S.

KK-MPi 69 Build

To build a legal semi-auto KK-MPi 69 requires a U.S.-made receiver, which I gather should not be pre-drilled as the rivet locations and holes for the trigger are different on the KK-MPi 69 than on a standard AKM-type rifle. Since the rifle is a blowback, the trunnion is also mounted farther back in the receiver. The example I used for this article belongs to friend of mine who is an expert on weapons of the former Warsaw Pact countries. In order to evaluate and shoot many of those weapons, which were not normally imported into the U.S., he obtained parts kits and had them assembled as semi-autos on U.S. receivers in compliance with U.S. law. In the case of the KK-MPi 69, he found the kit, then ordered a receiver without the holes drilled and sent everything to Troy Sellars of In Range, Inc. Sellars tried to keep the KK-MPi 69 as close to the original as possible, even recreating the markings on the receiver for safe, full-auto (D) and semi-auto (E). Note that on select-fire AKs the first setting after safe is full-auto.

I am glad my friend was willing to spend the money and time to have a legal semi-auto KK-MPi 69 built. It has given me a chance to go hands on with a rare Cold War relic I would not likely have encountered otherwise. For more information on In Range, Inc., visit inrangec2.com or call 865-932-6509. —Leroy Thompson



SPECIFICATIONS KK-MPi 69

CALIBER: 5.6x15.5R (.22 LR)

BARREL: 17.1 inches

OA LENGTH: 34.25 inches

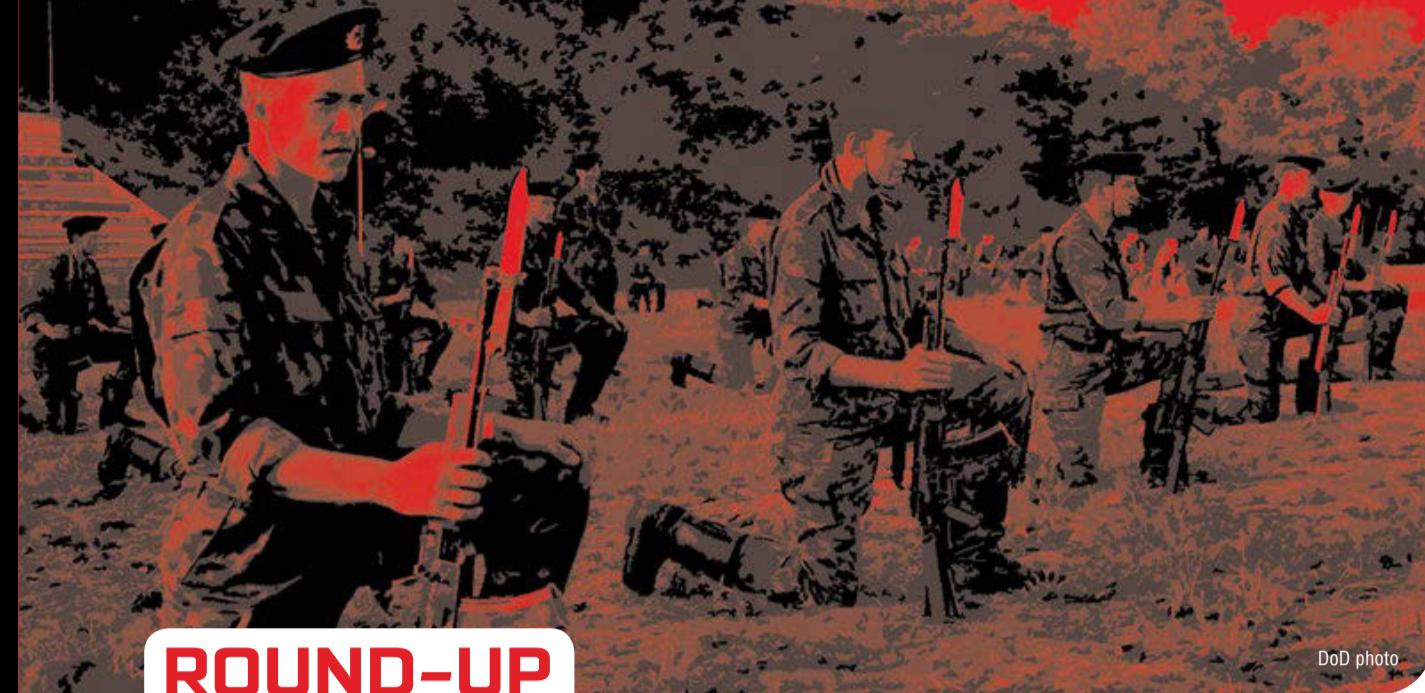
WEIGHT: 7.5 pounds (empty)

STOCK: Brown pebbled synthetic

SIGHTS: Post front, adjustable notch rear

ACTION: Blowback • **FINISH:** Blued • **CAPACITY:** 15+1

Image by Ken MacSwan



DoD photo

ROUND-UP

MISCELLANEOUS ACCESSORIES

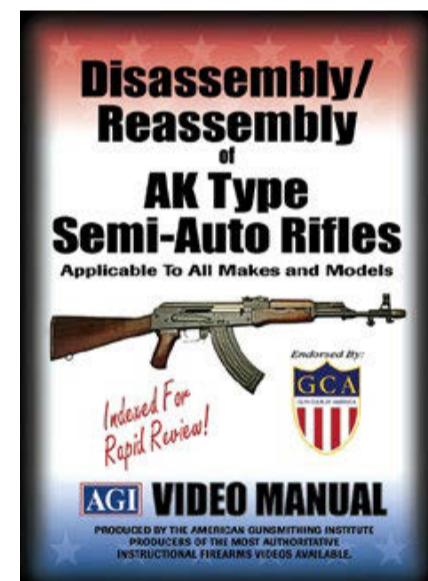


BY ROBERT A. SADOWSKI

The AK series of rifles have been in circulation now for nearly three quarters of a century. Evolving from the AK-47 to the AKM to the AK-74 to the modern variants of today, the series has changed with the times for modern tastes and current needs. However, there is always room for enhancement, and accessories and parts can help improve on the Kalashnikov design (or simply add to its charm). From historical collectibles that celebrate the design to the most modern of enhancements, there are numerous products out there for the discerning AK enthusiast. Read on to see some of the best options out there today.



ATLANTIC FIREARMS
AK-74 COMPENSATOR



AMERICAN
GUNSMITHING
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ATLANTIC FIREARMS
HUNGARIAN PARTS KIT



**GUNTEC AK
CHARGING HANDLE
EXTENSION**



AMERICAN GUNSMITHING INSTITUTE DVDS

Do you need to know how to pull apart an AK and put it back together again? The American Gunsmithing Institute has four gunsmithing DVDs completely devoted to the AK. The "How-To" DVD covers AK design variations, step-by-step disassembly instructions, cleaning and lubrication, and how to trouble shoot the AK platform. The "Building The AKS Rifle" DVD troubleshoot users how to build a semi-automatic AK from a parts kit. The "AKS-MAK90-AK47 Semi-Auto Rifles" is a technical manual and armorer's course for these specific AK variants. The "Disassembly/Reassembly" DVD offers tips for basic AK maintenance. (americanGunsmith.com; 800-797-0867)



**ECHO 93 V1
SLING ADAPTER**

**GUNART SOVIET
WEAPON PRINTS**



“**FROM HISTORICAL COLLECTIBLES THAT
CELEBRATE THE DESIGN TO THE MOST
MODERN OF ENHANCEMENTS, THERE
ARE NUMEROUS PRODUCTS
OUT THERE FOR THE
DISCERNING AK ENTHUSIAST.**”



GUNTEC USA AK CHARGING HANDLE EXTENSION

The Guntec AK Charging Handle Extension has a round body with three knurled rings for added grip when quickly manipulating the bolt. The extension slips over the AK's existing changing handle and is locked in place via a setscrew. An Allen wrench is provided to install the part. The part is made from steel and comes in a black finish. (guntecusa.com; 480-478-4517)

HUNGARIAN PARTS KIT FROM ATLANTIC FIREARMS

These rare Hungarian FEG AK63D AK-47 underfolder rifles in 7.62x39mm were built for mobile forces in Hungary by FEG. Limited numbers of the AK63D were built, but the kits are rated in excellent condition. All parts have matching serial numbers and come without receiver, barrel pin and barrel. Standard AK barrels and stamped receivers are compatible. (atlanticfirearms.com; 410-352-5183)

ATLANTIC FIREARMS AK-74 COMPENSATOR

The AK-74-style muzzle brake from Atlantic Firearms helps reduce recoil and muzzle rise during strings of fire. The compensator features screw-on installation for easy attachment to a standard AK barrel with 14x1 LH threads. The 922(r)-compliant unit sports a black phosphate finish. (atlanticfirearms.com; 410-352-5183)

ECHO 93 V1 SLING ADAPTER

The Echo 93 V1 sling adapter fits under the pistol grip of AKM pattern rifles (either fixed-, under- or sidefolding versions). The adapter mounts in between the pistol grip and receiver. The V1 is ambidextrous and allows attachment of a modern style sling to most AKMs. The V1 is their flagship sling adaptor in a line of 14 others variants for the AK platform. (echo93.com)

GUNART SOVIET WEAPON PRINTS

GunArt offers original and reproduction posters of Soviet weapons from the past 100 years, from the AKM to the 1891/30 Mosin-Nagant to the RPG-7. Each museum-quality poster—printed in Cyrillic—describes all the features and details of the weapons in full color. Posters are sized 11x17 inches or 23x25 inches, and are available in custom archival inks on sturdy, 80-pound stock paper. (gunart.net)



MISCELLANEOUS ACCESSORIES



HORNADY 7.62x39 STEEL CASE



SURPLUS 7.62x39MM SPAM CAN



GUNTEC AK RECOIL BUFFER

Designed to maximize the service life of your AK-pattern rifle as well as reduce perceived recoil, the AK-47 Recoil Buffer from GunTec USA provides shooters with an affordable option on this front. Made from orange-colored neoprene, the unit will work with AK-47, AKM and AK-74 variants as well as Saiga and Draco pistol versions. The unit fits inside the rear of the receiver and is designed to prevent "action slamming." (guntecusa.com; 480-478-4517)

HORNADY 7.62x39 STEEL CASE

Hornady's 7.62x39 123-grain SST Steel Case ammunition is high-quality ammo loaded with Hornady's SST bullets, which are manufactured with a match-grade jacket and designed for flatter trajectories and deeper penetration. Affordably priced for extended training sessions, the non-reloadable steel cases are polymer coated and contain non-corrosive Berdan primers. Factory muzzle velocity specs are 2,350 fps with a muzzle energy of 1,508 foot-pounds from a 20-inch barrel. (hornady.com; 800-338-3220)

MANTICORE ECLIPSE FLASH SUPPRESSOR

The MA-6414 Eclipse flash suppressor from Manticore Arms is specifically designed for AKs with the 14x1L muzzle threading. Flash is significantly reduced with the Eclipse and it will clear any projectile 0.311 inches in diameter or smaller, so 7.62x39mm, 7.62x54R, .223 Rem., 5.45mm and similar cartridges can be used. The unit is 2.25 inches in length and weighs only 3.6 ounces. The outside diameter is 22mm, so it is compatible with most standard muzzle accessories. (manticorearms.com; 630-715-0334)

STRIKE INDUSTRIES AK STRIKE LOCK

Strike Industries' Ambidextrous Strike Lock is a low-profile, ergonomically designed AK magazine release that offers operators ease of operation and an alternative to a bullet-button release. The release is easy to install on the triggerguard and over the magazine-release button. No gunsmithing is required to install the heavy-duty steel unit. The Strike Lock complies with California state laws and ships with the necessary mounting hardware. (strikeindustries.com)

SURPLUS 7.62x39MM SPAM CAN

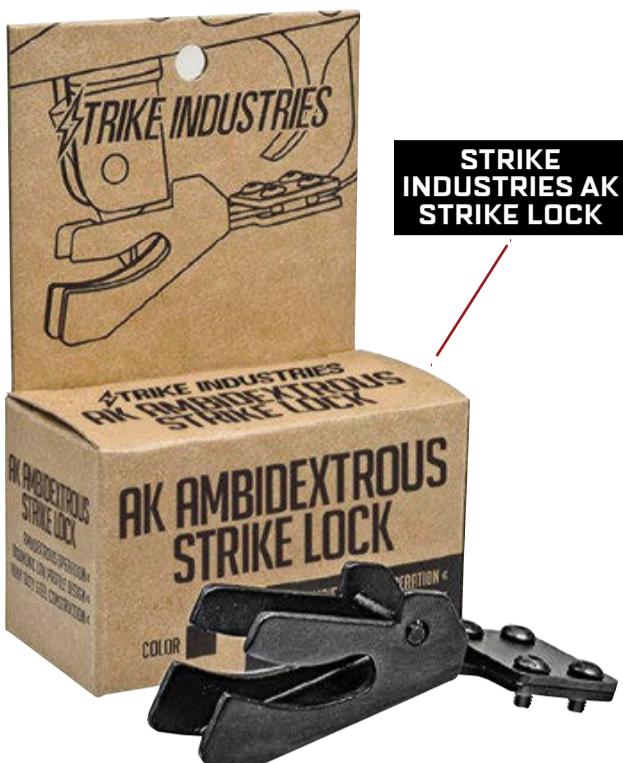
Surplus Ammo imports 640-round spam cans of 7.62x39mm military surplus ammunition from the Ulyanovsk Cartridge Works in Russia. The ammo is loaded with 122-grain hollow-point bullets with a bi-metal—copper over steel—jacket. Muzzle velocity is 2,396 fps out a standard AK. (surplusammo.com; 253-691-6636)

TAC-CON RAPTOR TRIGGER

Designed as a drop-in trigger system for the AK platform, the new Raptor from Tac-Con delivers a fire control system that stands out from the pack. Featuring the company's proprietary semi-automatic, assisted-reset mode, the Raptor allows the AK owner to dramatically reduce split times between shots. The trigger features a non-adjustable 4.5-pound pull weight with no take-up or overtravel for the ultimate in performance. (tacconusa.com; 623-282-1881)

MANTICORE ECLIPSE FLASH SUPPRESSOR





PARABELLUM RCS CHARGING HANDLE

The Ratchet Charging System (RCS) from Parabellum

Armament is a simple, drop-in gas tube replacement system that provides the operator with a left-side, non-reciprocating, folding charging handle. The unit features a true manual hold-open system as found on rifles such as the HK family of weapons. The RCS gives the AK user a unique operational feature for their AK, allowing for a different approach to both loading and clearing of the rifle. Made of 4140 steel with a Parkerized finish, the unit is compatible with most AK variants.

(parabellumarmament.com; 844-927-4327)



THE AK-47 & SOVIET WEAPONS WEB DIRECTORY

AMERICAN GUNSMITHING INSTITUTE
Americangunsmith.com

APEX GUN PARTS
Apexgunparts.com

ARCHANGEL
Archangelmanufacturing.com

ARSENAL
Arsenalinc.com

BOYDS GUNSTOCKS
Boydsgunstocks.com

BRAVO COMPANY USA
Bravocompanyusa.com

CENTURY ARMS
Centuryarms.com

CZECHPOINT
Czechpoint-usa.com

ECHO NINE THREE
Echo93.com

FORGE SURVIVAL
Forgesurvivalsupply.com

GIBBS RIFLE
Gibbsrifle.com

HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS
Harborfreight.com

KREBS CUSTOM GUNS
Krebscustom.com

KUSHNAPUP LLC
Kushnapup.com

MAGPUL
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MARCOLMAR FIREARMS
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PANTEAO PRODUCTIONS
Makeready.tv

PEARCE GRIP
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Realworldsurvivor.com

ROCK RIVER ARMS
Rockriverarms.com

RWC GROUP LLC
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STARK EQUIPMENT
Starkequipment.com

TACTICAL-LIFE
Tactical-life.com

TEXAS WEAPON SYSTEMS
Texasweaponsystems.com





TOIKAREV

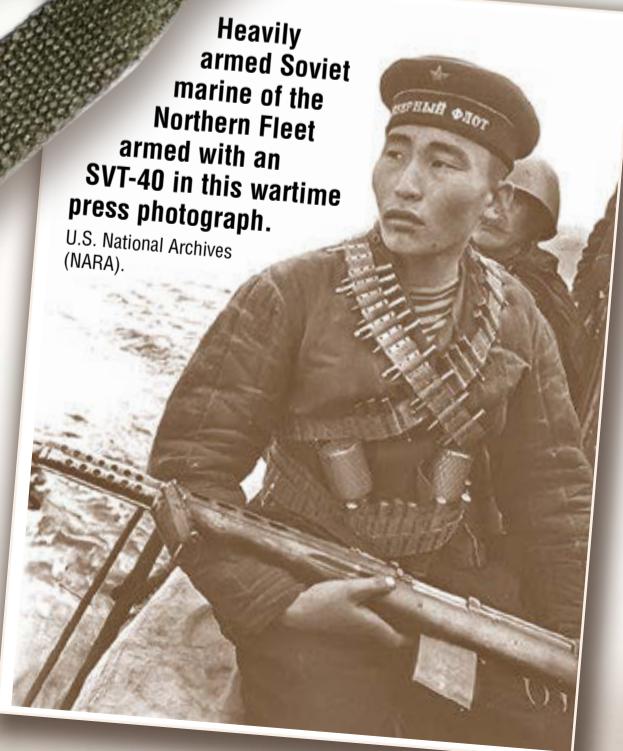
BY W. DARRIN WEAVER

Firearms designers struggled to develop viable self-loading, or semi-automatic, small arms since the 19th century.

Once the recoil-operated pistols from Hugo Borchardt and Georg Luger were shown to be both practical and reliable, the pace of advancement accelerated in both sidearms and rifles. Mauser, Mondragon, Mannlicher, Roth, Cei-Rigotti, Holek, Roth, Bang, General Liu Qing-En and other designers around the globe labored to come up with practical designs that met with varied degrees of success. Imperial Russian and later Soviet designers were no exception, and in some ways were well ahead of their time.

In about 1906, Vladimir Federov began developing a weapon under the rule of Czar Nicholas that worked on the short-recoil,

Heavily armed Soviet marine of the Northern Fleet armed with an SVT-40 in this wartime press photograph.
U.S. National Archives (NARA).



Soviet 7.62x54R built to bring heavy-duty firepower to the battlefields of WORLD WAR II!



SVT-40

closed-bolt, locked-breech principal. Federov worked closely with Vasily Degtyaryov (of later Degtyaryov MG fame). Several versions in different calibers were built and tested, and as the system evolved, it became known as the *Federov Avtomat* ("Avtomat" being a neologism for the Greek word "Automaton"). Over 3,000 of these rifles were produced at the Russian Kovrov Arsenal between 1915 and 1924.

The *Federov*, thought by many to be the first true "assault rifle," was select-fire, chambered in the Japanese 6.5mm (which was abundant in Russia at the time and available on the world market) and featured a detachable magazine. Though an innovative design for the era, the *Federov* was quite complex to manufacture and prone to quickly overheating during automatic fire. It was nevertheless used near the end of the imperial Russian participation in World War I, during the Russian Revolution and even later brought out from mothballs and used in limited numbers during the 1939-40 "Winter War" with Finland.

The Innovator

Fedor Vasilievich Tokarev was born in imperial Russia in 1871 and admitted to the Military Vocational School in 1888. He was a unit armorer by the age of 21 and four years later made a master instructor armorer. Just after the turn of the 19th century, he began working on self-loading conversions of the bolt-action M.1891 Mosin-Nagant. By 1910 his concept had developed far enough to be received for official testing, but was not ultimately adopted.

Tokarev survived the bloodletting of the Russian Revolution and afterward focused on designing a practical recoil-operated,

full-size rifle. In the meantime, Soviet military authorities abandoned the *Federov Avtomat*, along with other small arms that were chambered for foreign cartridges, and it was officially withdrawn from service in the late 1920s. During the same period, the military hierarchy ordered the development of submachine guns for the Red Army.

Sergei Simonov and Fedor Tokarev hastily completed examples to fill the void. Tokarev completed and submitted a select-fire, blowback subgun that fired the Soviet 7.62x38mm Nagant cartridge, which at the time was the only domestic pistol cartridge accepted for use. While interesting, the design was ultimately not accepted.

Tokarev spent much of the next several years developing a conversion of his unsuccessful Tokarev 1927 submachine gun for use with the new official pistol cartridge and his now famous Tokarev TT series of pistols. It was also during this period that he was noticed by the Soviet dictator, Joseph Stalin.

A request for a self-loading rifle for infantry use chambered in 7.62x54R came in the early 1930s. Tokarev, by this point, had given up on the idea of a recoil-operated, full-size rifle, and instead focused on a more efficient system using propellant gases tapped from the barrel. The gas was transmitted via a gas port assembly to a piston system above the barrel. The piston then transferred rearward energy to the bolt carrier by way of an operating rod, which in turn engaged a tipping bolt mechanism. By the middle of the decade he had prototypes ready.

In trials held in 1935, the Simonov design was chosen over prototypes submitted by Tokarev and the rest of the group, and officially



An early gun with grooves and machined recess (above, left), a later model with grooves (above, center) and an even later receiver (above, right).

adopted as the AVS-36. But Tokarev wasn't out yet. Additional testing revealed flaws in Simonov's design and another round of trials was ordered, this time between Tokarev's improved rifle and an improved version of the AVS-36. It didn't hurt that Stalin took a keen interest in the issue and may have intervened on behalf of Tokarev.

Not surprisingly, this time the Tokarev design fared better and was eventually chosen by Soviet authorities to become the standardized infantry rifle over the AVS-36. The rifle was given the designation "Self-Loading Rifle Tokarev, Model of 1938," abbreviated SVT-38, and put into production in 1939, at both the Tula and Izhmash arsenals.

A decent rifle somewhat ahead of its time, the SVT-38 did have teething problems however. About 100,000 to 150,000 were eventually produced, but the rifle did not perform particularly well in the 1939-1940 war with Finland. Several novel fea-

tures included an adjustable gas system, a 10-round detachable magazine, a six-slot muzzle brake and a cleaning rod inletted into the right side of the two-piece stock.

In the field it was too long and cumbersome and a rather complex design for simple peasant soldiers to operate and keep clean. In addition, recoil from the powerful Russian rimmed cartridge quickly fatigued the metal parts, contributing to a high breakage rate. The arctic cold was also a problem and the rifle developed a reputation for malfunctioning.

Tokarev worked on these problems while SVT-38 production was discontinued in 1940. His improved and simplified rifle was adopted in 1940 and designated "Self-Loading Rifle Tokarev, Model of 1940," or SVT-40. The SVT-40 included several modifications to hasten production, it was lighter than the SVT-38, did away with the cleaning rod and two-piece stock, and came with an improved mag release. More importantly, structural manufacturing problems were identified during service in Finland, culminating in a complete reengineering of the weapon's metallurgy.

Initially envisioned to replace all of the M.1891 Mosin-Nagant bolt-action rifles then in Soviet service, production of SVT-40s and variants could not keep up with the expectation. Thousands of SVT-40s were fielded between 1940-1941.

Tokarevs were made in several variations. These include the sniper version, or SNT-40, a carbine designated the SKT-40 and a fully-automatic model called the AVT-40. It was decided early on to manufacture and issue sniper versions of the SVT-40 to replace the scoped 1891/30s then in service. As such, nearly all SVTs were manufactured with scope mount rails machined into the sides of the receiver. Rifles

that proved more accurate than the others had an additional notch machined on the rear of the receiver and were fitted with the 3.5-power PU scope, and later the simplified and more common 4-power PE scope. Once assembled, the rifle was redesignated as an SNT-40. Performance in combat ultimately showed the system to be lackluster, with wide shot dispersion plaguing many users. As such, the practice of machining rails into the receiver sides was discontinued in 1942, and the Soviets went back to bolt-action sniper versions of the 1891/30 as official issue.

The Soviet military also reportedly tested a carbine version known as the SKT-40. These carbines were made at Tula in very limited numbers and had a modified handguard and 470m barrel, reducing overall length by 15.5 centimeters. Recoil was unacceptable and the SKT-40 was not accepted for general issue.

In Enemy Hands

German formations pierced the USSR's western border in June of 1941. The Germans had perfected *Blitzkrieg*, or "lightning war," tactics during the invasions of Poland, France and the "low countries." Russian defenses quickly withered into panic and retreat as *Wehrmacht* motorized divisions ripped through the country with unparalleled success. By November, Kursk had fallen and the Germans had pushed within 19 miles of Moscow. The only thing that kept them from final victory was the infamous Russian winter. With its onset, the juggernaut sputtered, and the Germans were forced to pause their drive until the following spring. Along the way, they captured tens of thousands of the new SVT-40s.

Ironically, the Finns and Germans may have appreciated the Tokarev more than the

SPECIFICATIONS

TOKAREV SVT-40

CALIBER:	7.62x54R
BARREL:	24.6 inches
OA LENGTH:	48.3 inches
WEIGHT:	8.5 pounds
STOCK:	Hardwood (usually beechwood)
SIGHTS:	Post front, adjustable ramp rear
ACTION:	Semi-auto, gas-operated
FINISH:	Blued
CAPACITY:	10+1





The machined recess on this early SVT is used to secure the SVT scope mount.

peasant soldiers of the Red Army, who preferred the simple and rugged M.1891.

To the German soldier on the ground it was accurate enough, reasonably reliable if scrupulously cared for and was often found with a mount and telescope. Its rate of fire was 25 rounds per minute and had an effective range at least the equal of the Karabiner 98k. The magazine was detachable and ammunition was plentiful, but, most of all, it was the only self-loader available to them, as large quantities of German-produced self-loaders had not reached the front. In *Wehrmacht* use, the rifle was given the designation "Selbstladegewehr 259(r)", the "r" indicating the weapon originated from Russia.

With the war going so badly, the Soviets had to look for simpler, quicker and cheaper solutions such as the PPSh 41 submachine gun to arm its soldiers. Though over 1 million SVTs were produced in 1941, the numbers quickly declined. Just over 250,000 were made in 1943, with other weapons such as the PPSh 41 and 43 taking priority. Ultimately, of course, the tide of the war turned and the Russians eventually expelled the invaders and captured the whole of Eastern Europe.

Post-War Legacy

The Simonov-designed SKS replaced the SVT in Soviet forces after the end of WWII. Almost all of the SVT-40s that remained in Soviet hands at that time were re-arsenaled and placed in deep storage. A few others of course were picked from the piles of captured equipment in Germany by

American GIs and sent home as souvenirs, but the weapon was relatively unknown to collectors until the 1950s, when Sam Cummings' Interarms acquired a few thousand previously captured SVTs that had been re-issued in Finland. These examples bear the Finnish 'SA' proof, and since importation

occurred before 1968 they bear no import stamps. Then, when the Soviet Union crumbled and the Warsaw Pact



Tokarev development in chronological order: the select-fire AVS-36 (C), SVT-38 (D) with right-sided cleaning rod, standard production SNT-40 with PU scope (A), and the rarely encountered SKT-40 Carbine (B).

SVT action without its wooden and stamped metal furniture. The mechanism works by way of tapping propellant gases from the barrel to drive the recoil rod rearward, which engages the bolt carrier and unlocks the tipping bolt, extracts and ejects the cartridge, recoils against the force of the recoil spring, strips off and chambers a cartridge as it again travels forward and locks into position for the next pull of the trigger.

collapsed, 18,760 of the previously mentioned re-arsenaled SVTs were released and imported into North America from Russia in the early 1990s. Another 1,000 SVTs were brought into Canada from the Ukraine, but the Canadian market would only absorb about 600 and the remainder sat in storage. Still others reportedly came in via Poland.

Small lots still await importation into the U.S. in Canada and Europe, but the likelihood that they will ever reach U.S. collectors is slim, given the current administration and recent executive orders banning importation of military small arms. As a result, prices have continued to climb, even for import-marked examples; from an average of below \$300 in the early 1990s to over \$1,000 and up today.

Collector interest in the SVT-40 and its accessories is growing. Ammunition is plentiful and examples can still be found at nearly every gun show. Three different manufacturers with several dates to gather, and numerous variations in features and markings, entice the more advanced collector. There are also a plethora of sling, cleaning kit, bayonet and scope/mount variations that are widely available and affordable on the current market.

Editor's Note: The author would like to thank Mr. Josef Bielik, Dr. Geoffrey Sturgess, Bob Jensen, Wes Dillon, Michael Heidler, James Julia Auction, the National Rifle Association, the staff of the U.S. Army Ordnance Museum, NARA, the United States Marine Corps Museum and the Swedish Army Museum, and Enterprise Arms for assistance with this article. For more in-depth reading on this subject, the author highly recommends the articles by Vic Thom as posted on mosinnagant.net.



China's entry into the semi-auto AK-style shotgun world is a solid one with dependable operation at a reasonable price.



For years now, the AK-pattern shotgun has grown in popularity here in the United States.

They vary in configuration from box-stock simple to space-age custom.

Guns dedicated to competitive shooting barely resemble their initial heritage. It may be the single most altered firearm in the AK family. It has created an entire market related to this platform encompassing the target competition, tactical and home-defense markets.

Initially, these shotguns were quite affordable out of the box with retail prices in the early 2000s as low as \$300. Imported in "sporting" configurations, the custom market took over, resulting in even greater market demand. Along

with alterations returning it to its original Russian-designed configuration, many enhancements were created for AK-style shotguns. The result was one of the fastest-cycling and capable semi-automatic shotguns on the market. Unfortunately, this increase in popularity brought with it significant price increases. Custom guns can cost well over \$2,000 these days. Even the out-of-the-box models are now \$1,000. While still incredibly popular, this increase has kept many away from the platform. As the AK-based shotgun continues to remain popular, a Chinese 12 gauge AK-style shotgun has appeared on the market and it looks promising.

Gun Details

Imported by Century Arms, the Catamount series of shotguns is a di-

rect answer to those looking for an AK-based shotgun at a reasonable price. The Fury variant uses standard rock-and-lock shotgun magazines, while the Fury II utilizes a magazine funnel into which magazines are inserted straight in. Both include two 5-round magazines that engage a last-round bolt-hold-open. Chambered for 2 3/4- and 3-inch shells, it shares many of the features seen on the Saiga-12 system. Built on an AK-style receiver, the internals have been moved to the rear to allow the gun to meet "sporting configuration" importation requirements.

The Fury uses a standard-style stock with a curved pistol grip, while the Fury II uses a thumbhole version. Controls are AK-based, pretty much identical to a box-stock Saiga-12. Sights are built in, with a deep rear notch and a large,



CATAMOUNT FURY II

AK-pattern shotgun from Century Arms delivers potent 12-GAUGE FIREPOWER on target!

BY DAVID BAHDE

bladed front sight. A hinged top cover includes a polymer top rail for optics or red-dot sights. The gas system is adjustable (two settings) with a rail on the bottom of the gas block for lights. The 20-inch barrel includes an internally threaded choke. Three choke tubes are included (full, modified, and cylinder) with a cleaning kit. Retail on the Fury is \$670. The Fury II is priced at \$670.

Century Arms sent me a Fury II for testing. Removing it from the box, I found that the overall fit and finish is commensurate with most out-of-the-box Saiga shotguns. Imports like this always seem to have some variance in finish, but this one was pretty nice. The hinged top cover was tight and the polymer top rail straight. The "V" rear sight is large and far more usable than those typically seen on these types of weapons, as is

the large, bladed front sight. The front gas block includes a lower rail for light mounting. Along with the lower rail, it includes a left-side sling loop that is welded to the block. There are two gas positions that are operated by pushing a detent and rotating the plug.

The polymer magazine funnel was tight with a large, paddle-style magazine release. Inserting the two magazines for testing, they both locked solidly into place for me. Running the bolt to the rear, it locked open. Magazine construction was commensurate with my five-round VEPR mags with metal feed lips. The magazines for the Fury are proprietary and will not fit in the VEPR or Saiga-12, nor will VEPR or Saiga magazines work in the Fury. The mouth of the Fury magazine is just a tad longer from front to back.

Internals look to be castings with a rough finish, but they operated smoothly. The trigger was typical of these; rough but predictable. There is no chrome lining in the barrel or chamber. The Fury II thumbhole stock meets the import restrictions while still simulating a typical pistol-grip stock in feel. It uses a nice cheekpiece to provide a decent purchase for sighting.

Range Testing

I actually had received an earlier test sample of the Fury II, but it had a magazine lock up in the gun that I could not remove. Century Arms took it back immediately and shipped another gun. With that in mind, initial testing was completed with a bit of skepticism. However, it disappeared immediately after shooting the second gun. Through



CATAMOUNT FURY II



The thumbhole stock was comfortable and easy to control, providing a solid cheekweld for fast and accurate sighting.

SPECIFICATIONS

CENTURY ARMS CATAMOUNT FURY II

GAUGE: 12 gauge

BARREL: 20 inches

OA LENGTH: 40.75 inches

WEIGHT: 8.7 pounds (empty)

STOCK: Polymer

SIGHTS: Rear notch, front blade

ACTION: Semi-auto

FINISH: Matte black

CAPACITY: 5+1

MSRP: \$670



Safety manipulation was smooth, although a bit long to access given the rearward location of the pistol grip.



The pistol-gripped thumbhole stock provided good access to the shotgun's trigger, which functioned flawlessly.



The hinged top cover of the shotgun featured a Picatinny rail anchored to the gas block portion.



Bolt manipulation is the same as any basic AK-configured weapon. The mag funnel facilitated straight insertion with no need to rock the mags.



The polymer handguard featured good ergonomics and stayed cool during rapid-fire testing of the shotgun.

a few hours and a couple hundred rounds, it never missed a beat. Testing was done primarily with Winchester Super Target at 1,200 feet per second (fps) and several boxes of Federal Top Gun 3-dram 1-1/8-ounce 7½ shot target loads. Ejection on these loads was positive as hulls were sent a good three feet forward.

Moving to loads under 1,200 fps, it could be a bit spotty in cycling, which was pretty much identical to the Russian guns. Honestly, adjusting the gas at the block did not seem to change much, but it was

still much more useful out of the box than many comparable guns I have used. The bolt hold-open worked every time with any load at 1,200 fps or higher. Reloads were fast, but make sure you check the mag funnel; mine came loose during shooting and required tightening.

Using tactical buckshot, the Fury II patterned extremely well. In fact, it ran the Federal Tactical #1 buckshot (listed at 1,100 fps) well and it patterned at 1 inch at 15 yards. It all patterned well, with nothing going outside 2.5 inches at that range.

UPPING THE ANTE

Fury 12 GA



New 922(r)-compliant Furys bring 10+1 firepower to the game!

BY MICHAEL O. HUMPHRIES

In addition to the standard Catamount Fury shotguns, Century Arms has now added two new members to the family—the 922(r)-compliant Fury and matching Fury II. Configured similarly to their siblings, the 922(r)-compliant versions add the required domestically produced parts to allow them to legally accept magazines with greater than five-round capacity. As a result,

both models come standard with not only two five-round magazines, but also one 10 rounder. Everything else good about the standard Furys (gas-operated piston-driven systems, adjustable gas regulators, the ability to accept both 2½- and 3-inch shells, etc.) is featured on these new 922(r) Furys, with the advantage of added firepower. For more information, visit centuryarms.com or call 800-527-1252.

The sights on this shotgun are head and shoulders above others I have tested. There is no issue using them at most any practical range. Tested with a couple of micro-dots, it worked well so long as you kept them toward the back of the rail. If the sight is too wide (and too far forward) it will interfere with cartridge ejection, just like on all of the AK-based shotguns I have tested.

Accuracy with slugs was commensurate with any shotgun, given I do my job well. At 25 yards, I was able to get a 3-inch group using Federal Tactical's Low Recoil Rifled Slug at 1,300 fps—not bad for iron sights. Using Winchester's Super-X BRI Rifled Slugs, it was not much worse. All in all, the Fury II was plenty accurate.

Overall ergonomics with the Fury II were similar to box-stock Saiga-12 shotguns. Having the trigger moved to the rear makes safety manipulation problematic, especially in any tactical environment. Recoil is light with the 1,300-fps loads, and the thumbhole stock is actually quite comfortable. Again, it's just long overall. The lower part of the forend is made from pretty thin plastic and did come loose during testing, so keep an eye on that as well.

Final Thoughts

The Fury II worked as well or better than comparable guns I have tested. Fit and finish were similar, if not a bit better than some—in my experience imports from both countries suffer some variance in quality.



The proprietary magazines that came with the Fury II were constructed of polymer and feature steel feed lips.

It ran right next to a VEPR shotgun I own in terms of running various shotgun loads and better than many other variants I have tested. The stock sights are better, and having a hinged top rail is a nice upgrade. If you are looking for an AK-based shotgun that runs well at a great price, the Fury in either configuration is a great choice. If you are looking for an AK-based shotgun that is a ton of fun to shoot, give the Fury II a look. For more information, visit centuryarms.com or call 800-527-1252. ★

**" IF YOU ARE
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AN AK-BASED
SHOTGUN THAT RUNS
WELL AT A GREAT
PRICE, THE FURY ...
IS A GREAT CHOICE. "**



PERFORMANCE CENTURY ARMS CATAMOUNT FURY II 12 GA

Buckshot	Velocity	Pattern
Federal #1 Buckshot	1,100	1.00
Federal LE127 9 Pellet 00	1,325	1.55
Federal P156 00	1,290	2.00
Hornady TAP Light Magnum 00	1,600	1.75

Velocity measured in fps and pattern in inches for spread at 15 yards.





RK-59

BY LEROY THOMPSON • PHOTOS BY KEN MACSWAN

One of my favorite concealment pistols has always been the Walther PPK, and, yes, at least a little of that fondness stems from reading James Bond novels as a youth.

Mostly, though, it has always proven to be a reliable pocket pistol. Unfortunately, I have mixed emotions about my favorite PPK. It is a PPK-L ("L" for lightweight), which I carried in a pocket or an ankle holster on close protection jobs where I was limited to a .32 caliber pistol or forced to use it as a backup. That ".32" part was the problem as the PPK-L has an alloy frame and Walther chose not to chamber it for the .380 cartridge.

In addition, I have to admit that I thought a 9x18mm PPK would be quite nice, and I even thought it would be better if it had an alloy frame. It would be light and powerful, and chambered in an easily available round (depending on which side of the Iron Curtain you found yourself). You can imagine my enthusiasm when I discovered that such a pistol existed in the Hungarian RK-59. Before discussing that pistol, however, I need to digress to give some history. To promote standardization of calibers in the old Warsaw Pact, member countries were ordered to use 7.62x39mm rifles and 9x18mm pistols. Some countries adopted their own locally produced Makarov PM pistols in 9x18mm, while others developed domestic designs that chambered the 9x18mm round.

In Hungary, this service pistol was developed by FEGARMY (usually abbreviated FEG). Based on the Walther PP, the PA-63 was designed to meet the needs of both military and police forces. Similar in design and function to the Walther PP, the PA-63 employs a polished alloy frame and a blued steel slide. Magazine

capacity is 7 rounds. The combination of the alloy frame and 9x18mm chambering made recoil fairly noticeable.

I'm assuming most reading this are familiar with the 9x18mm round, but I'll offer a simple comparison: It falls between the .380 ACP (9x17mm) and 9x19mm rounds in stopping power, pressure and recoil. It is designed for blowback pistols and considered to be about the most powerful round that should be practically fired in a blowback design. Ballistic figures normally show a 95-grain bullet at 1,050 fps (feet per second) for 231 foot-pounds of energy. Some hotter rounds were developed for the PMM Makarov. There are also some special 9x18mm rounds developed for penetrating body armor and for air marshals, among others.

OK, with that background, let's move on to the RK-59. This is a little known pistol, which I understand was developed for the AVH (*Államvédelmi Hatóság*), the Hungarian secret police. Based on the PA-63, but scaled down to Walther PPK size, it functions and disassembles like a PPK, but it has an alloy frame and a magazine



PISTOL

The Hungarian secret police's pocket-sized 9x18mm!

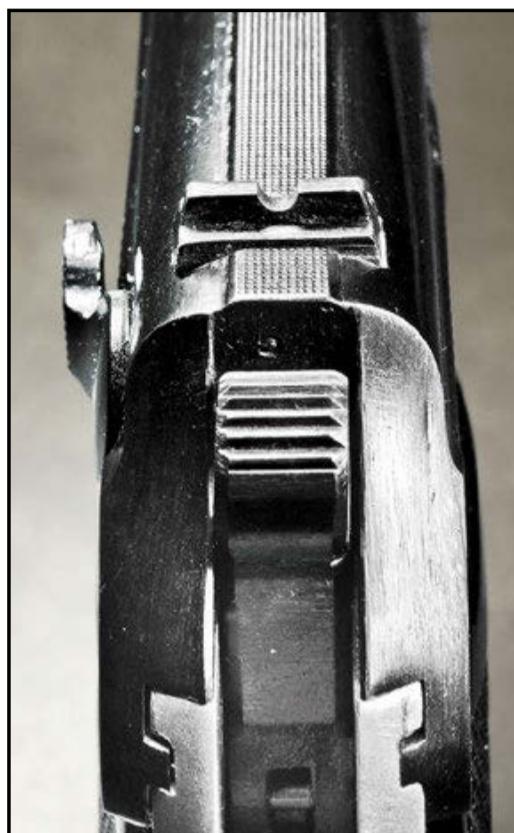
capacity of 6 rounds like a 9x18mm Makarov. To give an idea of the perception of the AVH by Hungarian citizens, the museum located in the former headquarters is known as the "house of terror." They were bad guys, but they came up with a good idea for a pistol.

When I got a chance to acquire an RK-59 25 years or so ago, I jumped at it. It came with a typical Warsaw Pact-style holster that

completely encased the pistol and two magazines. It appeared unfired. Shortly after I got it, I fired about 100 rounds through it to check function and how well regulated the sights were, and I started carrying it as a pocket pistol in a PPK side pocket holster. Only later did I learn that one reason the RK-59 is so rarely seen is that the aluminum frame was prone to rapid wear when



The 9x18mm RK-59 is based on the Hungarian PA-63, but scaled down to a more compact size like that of the Walther PPK. It was designed for use by the Hungarian secret police.



The sights of the RK-59 are simple, straightforward and basic. Note the notch rear unit.



The RK-59 employs a double-action/single-action system of operation.



A slide-mounted safety sweeps down to engage, concealing a prominent red dot.



The author's pistol came with two magazines as well as a leather flap holster.



Both magazines supplied with the author's pistol featured finger-rest extensions.

pounded by the 9x18mm round. Based on the amount of recoil when I shot it, the frame took a pounding. I've probably put a total of 250 rounds or so through mine, but I've now retired it to the safe as a collectible. Reportedly, FEG improved the metallurgy by adding 0.1-percent titanium to the aluminum alloy in the R61, which succeeded the RK-59 but is basically the same pistol. I have read, too, that some internal surfaces most subject to wear were also redesigned on the R61. One is on my want list, though I gather most of those imported into the U.S. are in .380, rather than 9x18mm Makarov, which I would greatly prefer.

Compared to the .32 ACP Model 48 (48M) autos used by the Hungarian police

prior to the introduction of the PA-63, the PA-63 gave uniformed officers a pistol with substantially more stopping power. Likewise, the RK-59 gave plainclothes investigators and intelligence personnel a pistol that could be concealed readily, yet was powerful (by European police standards of the time). Once the Warsaw Pact dissolved and Hungary joined NATO, the FEG P9RC 9mm double-action (DA), high-capacity pistol became the standard Hungarian military arm. By the way, I should note that the 48M police pistol mentioned above should not be confused with the Model 48 used by the Hungarian Army; this was the Hungarian version of the TT-33 Tokarev.

tol, one of the RK-59 magazines had been supplied with just the flat baseplate. This allows the finger to slide under the magazine more comfortably, and it also does not snag when carried in the pocket. I found the RK-59 magazine was especially prone to this when carried in the pocket. On the other hand, the finger rest does offer a good gripping point for removing the spare magazine from its pocket on the holster.

Some years ago, I discussed the RK-59 in an article and mentioned that I thought it could serve a niche for use by certain military personnel. When the handgun is the primary weapon for an officer or a soldier whose duties make carry of a rifle or carbine inconvenient, then a larger pistol firing a military round such as the 9x19mm or .45 ACP round is desirable. However, the standard military handgun cartridge in Hungary at the time was the 9x18 Makarov, so choosing the RK-59, which could fit in a pocket and only held one fewer round than the PA-63, seemed to offer an option for troops not wanting to be so obviously armed.

I'll admit that I was disappointed when I had to stop using the RK-59 as a pocket pistol due to fears of excessive wear if I shot it; and if I were going to carry it, I would shoot it. The RK-59 today stays in the safe and reminds me of the days when I thought an alloy-framed PPK in 9x18mm Makarov would be the perfect pocket pistol. I still think it's a good idea, but maybe instead as one that would hold up a little better! ★

SPECIFICATIONS

RK-59

- CALIBER:** 9x18mm
- BARREL:** 3.4 inches
- OA LENGTH:** 6.2 inches
- WEIGHT:** 18.5 ounces (empty)
- GRIP:** Wood
- SIGHTS:** Rear notch, front post
- ACTION:** DA/SA
- FINISH:** Blued
- CAPACITY:** 6+1

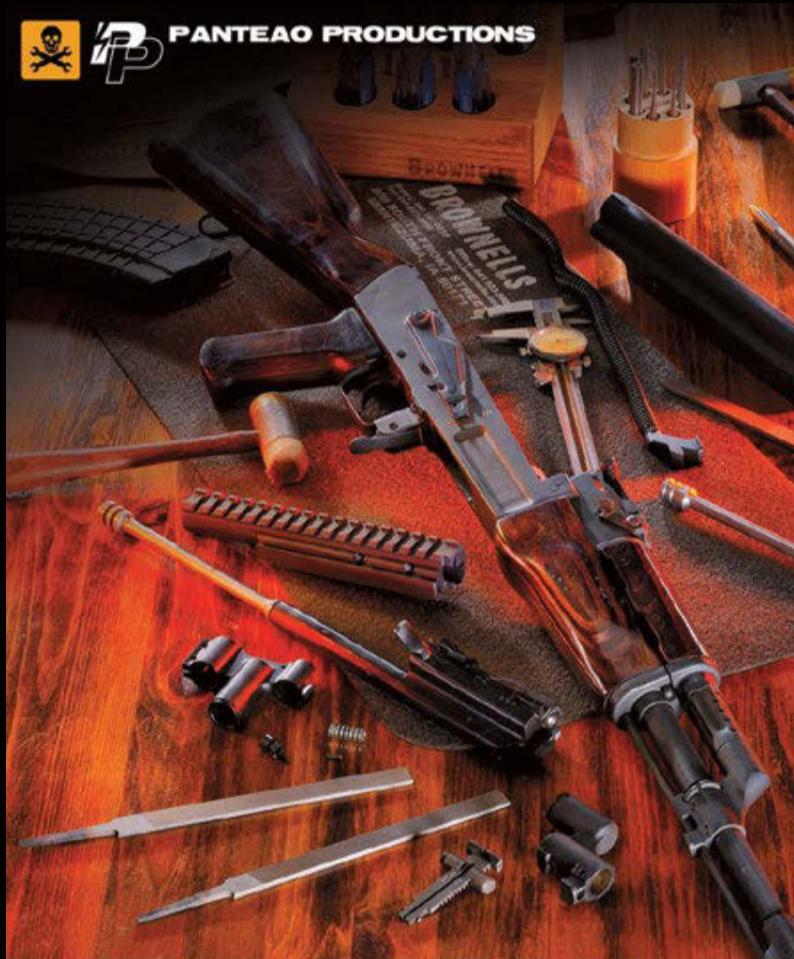
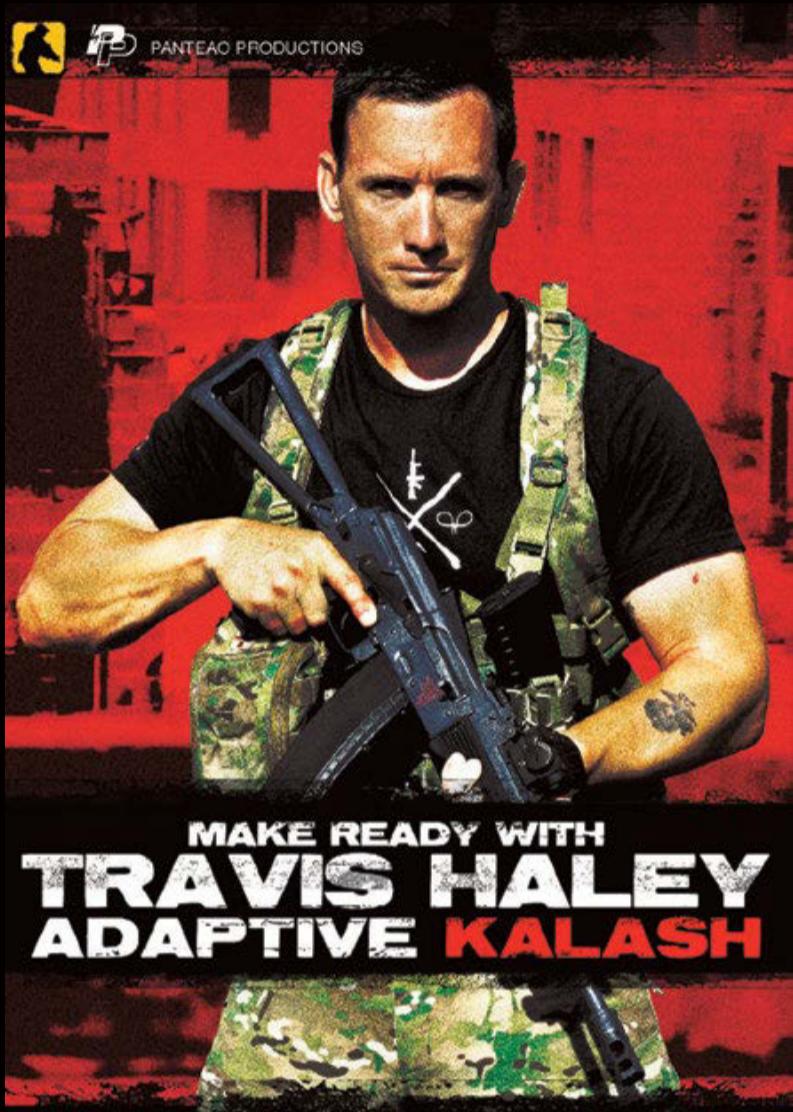
Pocket Power

I'm sitting here with my RK-59 while I write and there are a few features which are worth noting. The two-tone effect of the brushed aluminum frame and black slide makes for an interesting "Panda-like" appearance. The finish of the aluminum portion is flat enough that it is actually non-reflective. The slide bears the Hungarian coat of arms along with "RK-59/Cal.9mm M" and "FEG/Budapest." Both magazines, which are serial numbered to the pistol, have a finger-rest extension, which is actually too small for resting the fingers. It is still necessary to rest the little finger under the magazine (as you would on the PPK), and it hurts my hand when fired due to the 9x18 Makarov round's recoil. I would prefer that, as is normal with a PPK pis-



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THE AK ARCHITECT



Considering the life and works of Mikhail Kalashnikov.

BY MAXIM POPENKER

I was born in the Soviet Union in 1973, a year before the adoption of the AK-74. I cannot remember when or where I first heard the name Mikhail Timofeyevich Kalashnikov, but by age 14 I was already quite familiar with his most famous creation, the "Avtomat Kalashnikova," (AK for short) courtesy of the Soviet Union's education system.

When I heard of his unfortunate passing at age 94 on December 23, 2013, I began to reflect upon the influence both he and his signature weapon have had on the world.

During Soviet times, every schoolboy in 9th or 10th (final) grade in high school had to attend mandatory "beginners military training" lessons two hours a week. These lessons included basics of military insignia and uniforms, regulations, marching drills, small unit tactics and, last but not least, small arms training with a standard military rifle.

I still can remember the heft of the well-worn, demilled "training" AK that was used dur-

ing our lessons to explain the function and use of the gun, as well as its disassembly, reassembly and, finally, shooting positions. Like every other boy in my grade, I first shot an AKM in 1988 (during my 9th grade) and an AK-74 the next year. For the skinny, 120-pound schoolboy that I was at the time, I found the AKM's 7.62mm recoil almost punishing (especially when firing in a prone position). The AK-74 was almost a pleasure to fire when compared to its predecessor. It was even more pleasing to see perforated bullseyes on a standard military "chest target," which were much easier to achieve with 5.45mm AK-74.

By this time I already had an interest in firearms, but my knowledge about Mikhail Kalashnikov was limited to his name and the designation of the famous weapons that bear his name—AK rifles, RPK squad automatics and PK universal machine guns. Only much later did I learn about the life and works of this unique man, who eventually achieved



Image courtesy of RWC Group

Mikhail Timofeyevich Kalashnikov was easily one of the most influential small arms designers in history, and his loss was felt around the world.

fame and a kind of cult of personality well beyond any other Soviet small arms designer.

Was this fame and reputation deserved? Undeniably. Despite the fact that most of the weapons that bear Kalashnikov's name were synergistic products of many different people and organizations, it was Mikhail Timofeyevich who was the intellect and the driving force behind these creations. According to Soviet practice,

some design bureaus and their products were allowed to bear the name of their first (founding) chief designers, and some not. For example, all aviation design bureaus were named after their founding fathers (Tupolev, Antonov, Sukhoi, Mikoyan and Gurevich, etc.), but automotive and tank design bureaus, for example, usually had some generic, non-descriptive names. General issue small arms followed the aviation pattern,

LEGACY OF A LEGEND

In the annals of firearms history, the legacy of Mikhail Kalashnikov and his signature creation are inexorably intertwined. With the iconic AK-47 and its many offshoots, Kalashnikov created a legacy with influence that would span the world throughout the decades following its initial appearance. However, his work did not end with just the iconic AK-47, but rather served as a starting point for many other influential Soviet small arms designs.

1949

AK assault rifle/AKS folding-stock assault rifle

After testing and troop trials, the first Soviet mass-produced "intermediate caliber" 7.62x39mm assault rifle was put into production.

1959

AKM assault rifle/AKMS folding-stock assault rifle

Next generation 7.62x39mm assault rifle with stamped steel receiver, still in widespread use in Russia and worldwide.



however, in being named after their chief designer or designers. And despite the fact that the AK rifle is infinitely simpler and cheaper than Tupolev's strategic bomber or Sukhoi's supersonic interceptor, it ultimately played a more important role than those big, sleek and super-expensive jets.

Soviet Icon

The AK became the weapon of the people; first of the people of the Soviet Union, and later from the Soviet perspective of almost any people who fought for freedom and independence. Of course, sooner or later, AKs fell into the wrong hands or became weapons of oppression (like in Hungary in 1956). Nonetheless, it soon became the most popular and widespread weapon for use around the world.

So, what was the role of the Mikhail Kalashnikov in the grand scheme of things? Kalashnikov became a symbol of a self-made man in the collectivistic Soviet Union, one rising from the status of a humble sergeant with a backcountry peasant background to a rank of lieutenant general, doctor of sciences and an honorable member of many organizations and societies. He had drive and engineering talent, and he learned on the go. He

always strived to find perfection in simplicity, to incorporate the best ideas and to produce the most reliable weapons possible under existing circumstances. In a way, he also was an ideal Soviet citizen—hardworking, humble and forgiving of the state for the hardships it placed on its citizens through mistakes or bad policies.

Finally, Kalashnikov was responsible for some of the most successful weapon designs of the 20th century. All Kalashnikov creations are simple, robust and, most important of all, work anywhere, everywhere and every time. His most famous design, the AK, is

serious limitations that come from the obsolete, rimmed 7.62x54R round. In terms of simplicity and reliability, in my opinion it beat American designs such as the M60 universal and M73 tank machine guns. It is a rarely known fact that during the 1970s, the U.S. Army studied the Kalashnikov PKT tank machine gun as an inspiration for a possible replacement for the ill-fated M73 tank machine gun of U.S. design. In a report dated 1975, experts from the Rock Island Arsenal concluded that the "PKT machine gun is essentially a rugged, reliable weapon" and that it can be used as

was described as "fundamentally reliable, easily maintained and dependable under adverse environmental conditions," and "accuracy of the PKM machine gun is consistent with that of most contemporary automatic weapons of its class." This is a very high praise from people who could hardly be described as fans of anything Soviet, and the same basic description can be applied to most military small arms that bear Kalashnikov's name.

Shaping The Future

The genius of Mikhail Timofeyevich Kalashnikov was in seeing the exact balance of existing ideas, parts and technologies that would produce the necessary result with a minimum of parts. His main motto, reflected in the title of his last memoir, was "Everything necessary is simple" (the full version of this phrase, which he often shared, was "Everything complicated is unnecessary, everything necessary is simple."). He set the mark for following generations of small arms

designers in terms of simplicity, reliability and in the effectiveness of his weapons. His influence will be felt well beyond his years here on earth. Rest in peace, Mikhail Timofeyevich Kalashnikov. ★

Kalashnikov's signature creation, the AK, spawned an entire family of Soviet small arms that served during the Cold War and beyond.



as iconic as a gun can be, but his other designs were no less successful.

For example, Kalashnikov's PK machine gun is one of the lightest and most reliable weapons in its class, despite

a basis for an improved U.S.-made tank machine gun.

In another report, dated 1974 and issued by the U.S. Army Foreign Science And Technology Center, the Kalashnikov PKM machine gun

1959

RPK light machine gun

Squad automatic 7.62x39mm weapon based on AKM, still in use in Russia and worldwide.



1969

PKM machine gun

Based on the earlier obsolete PK machine gun from 1961, this general-purpose 7.62x54R machine gun is still in widespread use.

1974

AK-74 assault rifle/AKS-74 folding-stock assault rifle

Modern 5.45x39mm assault rifle, firing reduced-caliber, high-velocity projectiles comparable in effectiveness to 5.56mm NATO. Still in widespread use in Russia and elsewhere.

1979

AKS-74U compact assault rifle

Shortened version of the AKS-74, initially intended as a 5.45x39mm personal defense weapon for non-infantry personnel. Still in widespread use in Russia and elsewhere.



REFERENCE BOOKS



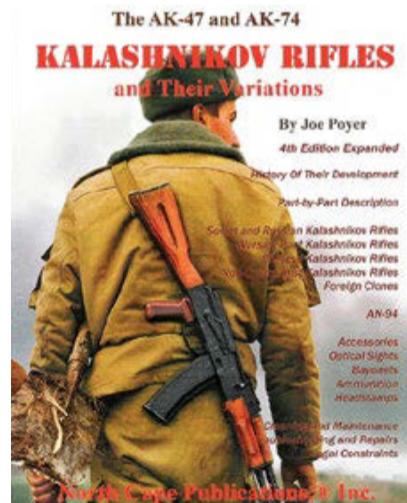
BY MICHAEL O. HUMPHRIES

With a gun as significant and influential as the AK series of weapons, there is a wealth of information to be gleaned by the enthusiastic student of its operation and history.

For those looking to learn as much as possible about the AK and its story, take a look at this selection of some of the more interesting books available on the subject. You may just want to add one or all of them to your personal library.

The AK-47 And AK-74 Kalashnikov Rifles And Their Variations

Now in its expanded 4th edition, Joe Poyer's *The AK-47 and AK-74 Kalashnikov Rifles and Their Variations* from North Cape Publications provides a great resource for



both shooters and collectors of this classic line of weapons.

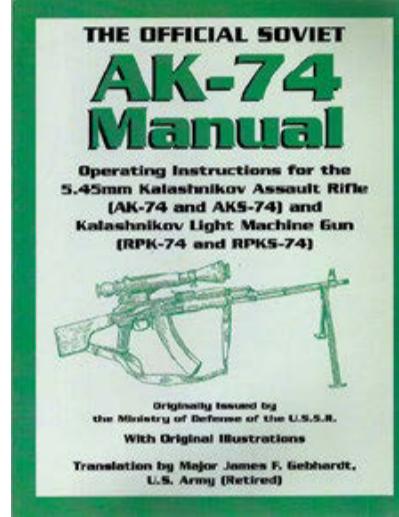
Spanning 194 black-and-white pages, the book provides in-depth information on Mikhail Kalashnikov's most famous creation from its earliest days up to the present. Covering the

first AK-47 through the development of the AKM through to the AK-74 and on to today's most current variants, the book takes the reader through the full history of the design.

The book not only covers the Russian variants of the design, but also its siblings that sprang up in allied nations around the world, ranging from Egypt to Yugoslavia to Bulgaria to China, to name just a few. In addition to these members of the tightly knit AK family, the book also considers weapons from outside the Soviet sphere of influence that were directly inspired by Kalashnikov's design. These include examples such as the Israeli Galil, the Belgian FNC and the Swiss StG.90 series. Other chapters delve into the story of the man behind the gun, while other sections are dedicated to ancillary parts and accessories such as optics and cleaning tools. Priced at \$22.95, this book would make a great addition to any AK fan's reference collection library. (northcapepubs.com; 800-745-9714)

The Official Soviet AK-74 Manual

Translated by Major James F. Gebhardt, a retired U.S. Army officer and renowned military historian, *The Official Soviet AK-74 Manual: Operating Instructions for the 5.45mm Kalashnikov Assault Rifle (AK-74 and AKS-74) and Kalashnikov Light Machine Gun (RPK-74 and RPKS-74)* delivers to readers what is in



effect a primary source on the AK-74 family of weapons.

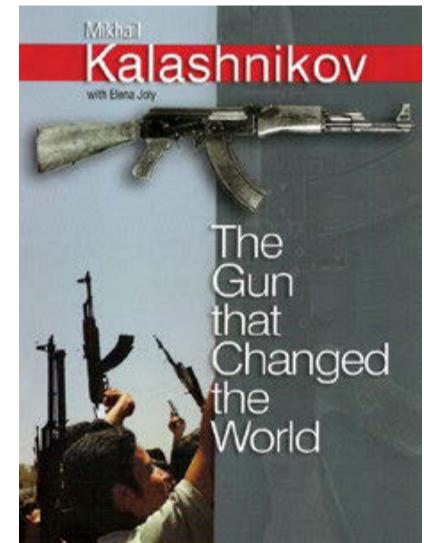
The black-and-white book from Paladin Press spans 150 pages and is packed with engrossing technical information on the AK-74 and its siblings. Originally published by the Ministry of Defense of the USSR to teach members of the Russian military how to employ their weapons, the book covers every detail of the operation and maintenance of the 5.45x39mm variations of the Kalashnikov rifle.

Sections include such technical information as ballistic tables, zeroing information, combat firing instructions, data for the 5.45mm service cartridge and more. Where applicable, the book also includes recreations of the original illustrations to help readers understand every nuance of the information being provided. The book is priced at \$30 and would make a great companion at the maintenance table or in the range bag of any AK fan. (paladin-press.com; 800-392-2400)

The Gun That Changed The World

Narrated by Mikhail Kalashnikov and studiously transcribed by Elena Joy, *The Gun that Changed the World* tells the story of the self-taught engineer who created one of the most influential and successful weapons in human history in his own words.

Rather than focusing on the minute details of the AK-47 and its development, this book covers the story of Mikhail Kalashnikov himself. From his birth in 1919 through his childhood to his time in combat in World War II to his creation of



the AK-47 and how it affected the rest of his life, the story gives you a deeper understanding of the man behind the famous weapon.

For those who want a bit of a different perspective on the AK-47 (beyond barrel lengths, rates of twist, numbers produced, etc.) this book is definitely worth a look. It is priced at \$18.66 and is available from online retailers and Polity Books. (politybooks.com) ★

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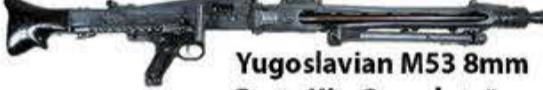
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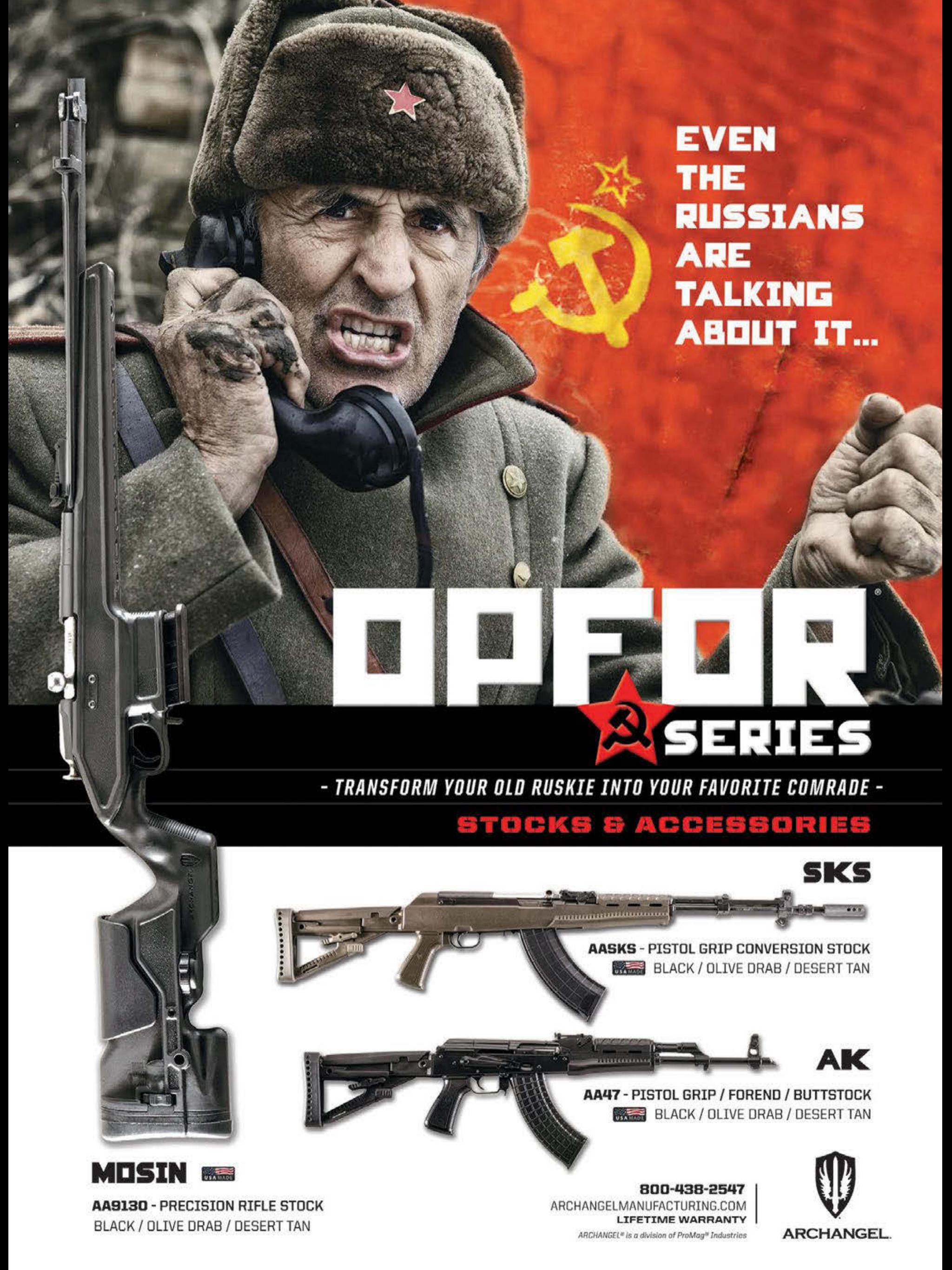


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