

The Kalashnikov

Taking into account all of its many models, the Kalashnikov rifle has probably been made in greater numbers than any other gun. Estimates of worldwide production exceed 90 million weapons. It was principally responsible for the elimination of the African elephant herds; it appears on the national flag of at least one country (Mozambique) and in the insignia of numerous political factions and terrorist groups; and even people with only minimal familiarity with firearms can usually recognize its silhouette at a glance. In modern African trouble spots, a loaded, second-source, fourth-hand AK can be had for as little as \$5. A brand-new gun costs \$90 from the factory . . . if you take a few thousand. In the U.S., semiautomatic versions sell for around \$300.

All of the variants below are similar in operation; there's no familiarity penalty to go from one to another.

Izhmash AK-47, 7.62×39mm (Russia, 1951-1960)

The *Avtomat Kalashnikova obrazets 1947g* ("Kalashnikov's automatic rifle model 1947") was the original rifle version, with a heavy, milled receiver and the distinctive curved magazine. By the mid-1950s, it had been exported in large numbers to Communist forces everywhere, and licensed to numerous states, including Bulgaria, China, East Germany, Finland, Hungary, Poland, and Romania. Nine million were made in Russia alone. Pakistani gunsmiths still sell hand-made copies today.

The AK-47 takes a 0.6-lb. multi-purpose bayonet (Reach 1). It's often loaded with API ammo (Dmg 4d-1(2) pi- inc).

The *AKS-47* (1951-1960) had a folding stock: Wt. 10.6, Bulk -5*.

The *RPK* (1955-1988) had a longer barrel and a bipod: Dmg 6d pi, Acc 5, Range 600/3,900, Wt. 13/2.5, Shots 40+1(3), ST 9B†, Cost \$900/\$32. There was also a 75-round drum (-1 Bulk, \$264, 4.6 lbs.). Both magazines work in the AK-47.

The modernized *AKM* (1960-1985) had a cheaper and lighter stamped receiver: Wt. 8.7. The AKM became even more widespread than the AK-47, and is the variant most often encountered. Many continue to call it the "AK-47." It has been made in Bulgaria, East Germany, Egypt,

India, Iraq, North Korea, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia.

The *AKMS* (1960-1985) had a folding stock: Wt. 9.4, Bulk -5*.

The *AK-103* (1993-) is the latest model, with a plastic folding stock and plastic magazine: Wt. 9.1/1.6, Bulk -5*.

Izhmash AK-74, 5.45×39mm (Russia, 1974-1990)

This was basically an improved AKM chambered for a smaller-caliber cartridge. The most readily apparent differences were a prominent muzzle brake and a new synthetic-covered magazine (originally orange, later brown or black). The muzzle brake was effective but increased muzzle blast (+2 to any Hearing or Vision roll to locate an AK-74 firing in the dark). Some 6.5 million were made, and it was licensed to Bulgaria, East Germany, North Korea, Poland, and Romania.

The AK-74 takes a 0.6-lb. multi-purpose bayonet (Reach 1). A 60-round high-density magazine (\$40, 2.7 lbs.) became available in the 1990s.

The *AKS-74* (1975-1990) had a folding stock: Wt. 8.8, Bulk -5*.

The *AKS-74U* (1979-1992) was a carbine for service with vehicle crews and special-ops forces (terrorist Osama bin Laden seems to favor it, too). It had a folding stock and a much shorter barrel: Dmg 4d-1 pi, Acc 3, Range 360/2,500, Wt. 6.7, RoF 13, ST 8†, Bulk -4*. It could be fitted with a 1.4-lb. wiper suppressor (-1 to Hearing, -1 Bulk, lasts 90 shots), which required the use of subsonic ammunition (p. 165): Dmg 2d-1 pi, Range 250/1,600, and the total Hearing penalty is -2.

The modernized *AK-74M* (1989-) is currently in service with Russian front-line units. It has a plastic folding stock: Wt. 8.3, Bulk -5*. It can mount a 2-lb. 4× night sight (+2 Acc and Night Vision 5, XS/10 hrs).

The *RPK-74* (1976-1990) was a squad automatic version with a longer barrel and a bipod: Dmg 5d+1 pi, Acc 5, Range 650/4,200, Wt. 12.2/1.8, Shots 45+1(3), ST 9B†, Cost \$900/\$36. There was also a 90-round drum (-1 Bulk, \$262, 4.6 lbs.). Both magazines work in the AK-74.

The *AK-101* (1993-) is chambered for the 5.56×45mm NATO round: Dmg 4d+2 pi, Wt. 8.3/1.3, Bulk -5*.

