

# KALASHNIKOVS—

# 3 OF THE BEST

Text and photos  
by Peter G. Kokalis

## Born in Bulgaria, Made in the USA

**KOKALIS SAYS THE AKs BEING OFFERED  
BY ARSENAL, INC., ARE THE BEST HE'S SEEN.  
THEY'RE EXPENSIVE AND WORTH EVERY PENNY.**

In numbers produced, no infantry rifle in the history of modern warfare even comes close to Mikhail T. Kalashnikov's famous assault rifle. It has been estimated that almost 100 million have been produced by more than a dozen countries, including Albania, Bulgaria, China, East Germany, Egypt, Finland, Hungary, Iraq, Israel (the Galil derivative), North Korea, Poland, Romania, Russia, South Africa (the R4 series) and the former Yugoslavia.

Chambered originally for the 7.62x39mm intermediate-size cartridge, the Kalashnikov assault rifle was adopted by the Red Army in 1949 after more than four years of development. Between 1948 and 1950, the AK47 (Avtomat Kalashnikova obrazets 1947g—Kalashnikov assault rifle model 1947) was manufactured with a sheet-metal receiver.

By 1951, this type had been replaced by the far more common variant with a machined, drop-forged receiver (there were two models of this variant and they differed principally in the method by which the buttstock was attached to the receiver).

The AKM (Modernizirovanniy Avtomat sistemi Kalashnikova) version, again with a pinned and riveted sheet-metal receiver, was introduced in 1959. My personal druthers have always been for the AK47 with its more substantial machined, drop-forged receiver. The accuracy potential is slightly greater, as there is less twisting of the receiver around the barrel's axis during the recoil cycle.

Forged receiver AK47s all have a distinctive rectangular lightening mill cut directly above and forward of the magazine well on both sides of the receiver.

I have examined and fielded literally hundreds of Kalashnikovs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Angola, Afghanistan and El Salvador. Among the very best are those manufactured by Arsenal in Bulgaria. Arsenal now has a subsidiary in the United States, which is in full-scale production of a wide range of semi-automatic-only AK47-type rifles.

SHOTGUN NEWS was recently sent three distinctly different models of Arsenal rifles for test and evaluation. While the

**The Arsenal SAS M-7 A1 is a classic example of the AK47 with the down-folding stock that is a perennial favorite of ground pounders on both sides of the firing line.**

