

The AK-47 is a selective fire, gas operated 7.62mm assault rifle developed in the Soviet Union by Mikhail Kalashnikov.

The AK-47 was one of the first true assault rifles and, due to its durability, low production cost and ease of use, the weapon and its numerous variants remain the most widely used assault rifles in the world. The main advantages of the Kalashnikov rifle are its simple design, fairly compact size and adaptation to mass production.



The notched rear tangent iron sight is adjustable, and is calibrated in hundreds of meters. The front sight is a post adjustable for elevation in the field. Windage adjustment is done by the armory before issue. The battle setting places the round within a few centimeters above or below the point of aim out to about 250 meters (275 yd). This "point-blank range" setting allows the shooter to fire the gun at any close target without adjusting the sights. Longer settings are intended for area suppression. The fire selector acts as a dust cover for the charging handle raceway when placed on safe. This prevents intrusion of dust and other debris into the internal parts.

To fire, the operator inserts a loaded magazine, moves the selector lever to the lowest position, pulls back and releases the charging handle, aims, and then pulls the trigger. In this setting, the firearm fires only once (semi-automatic), requiring the trigger to be released and depressed again for the next shot. With the selector in the middle position (full-automatic), the rifle continues to fire, automatically cycling fresh rounds into the chamber, until the magazine is exhausted or pressure is released from the trigger. As each bullet travels through the barrel, a portion of the gases expanding behind it is diverted into the gas tube above the barrel, where it impacts the gas piston. The piston, in turn, is driven backward, pushing the bolt carrier, which causes the bolt to move backwards, ejecting the spent round, and chambering a new round when the recoil spring pushes it back.

The AK-47 weighs 4.3 kg (9.5 lb) with empty magazine. It has a length of 870 mm (34.3 in) fixed wooden stock, 875 mm (34.4 in) folding stock extended or 645 mm (25.4 in) stock folded. The barrel length is 415 mm (16.3 in). It is gas operated with a rotating bolt and can fire up to 600 rounds per minute.



The standard AK-47 or AKM fires the 7.62x39mm cartridge with a muzzle velocity of 710 meters per second (2,300 ft/s). Muzzle energy is 2,010 joules (1,480 ft-lb). Cartridge case length is 38.6 millimeters (1.52 in), weight is 18.21 grams (281.0 gr). Projectile weight is normally 8 grams (120 gr). The AK-47 and AKM, with the 7.62x39mm cartridge, have a maximum effective range of around 400 meters (1,300 ft) and can travel up to 800 meters (2,600 ft).



A number of countries produce or use variants of the AK-47. Some of those countries are:

Albania, Bulgaria, China, Finland, German Democratic Republic, Egypt, Hungary, Iraq, India, Iran, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Sudan, Vietnam and Venezuela.



Variants include:

AK-47 1948-51, 7.62x39mm – The very earliest models, with the Type 1 stamped sheet metal receiver, are now very rare.

AK-47 1952, 7.62x39mm – Has a milled receiver and wooden butt stock and hand guard. Barrel and chamber are chrome plated to resist corrosion. Rifle weight is 4.2 kg (9.3 lb).

AKS-47 – Featured a downward-folding metal stock, for use in the restricted space in the BMP infantry combat vehicle, as well as by paratroops.

RPK, 7.62x39mm – Squad automatic rifle version with longer barrel and bipod.

AKM, 7.62x39mm – A simplified, lighter version of the AK-47; Type 4 receiver is made from stamped and riveted sheet metal (see schematic above). A slanted muzzle device was added to counter climb in automatic fire. Rifle weight is 3.1 kg (6.8 lb) due to the lighter receiver.

AKMS, 7.62x39mm – Folding-stock version of the AKM intended for airborne troops. Stock may be either side- or under-folding

AK-74 series, 5.45x39mm , AK-101 series, AK-103/AK-104 series, AK-107/AK-108 series