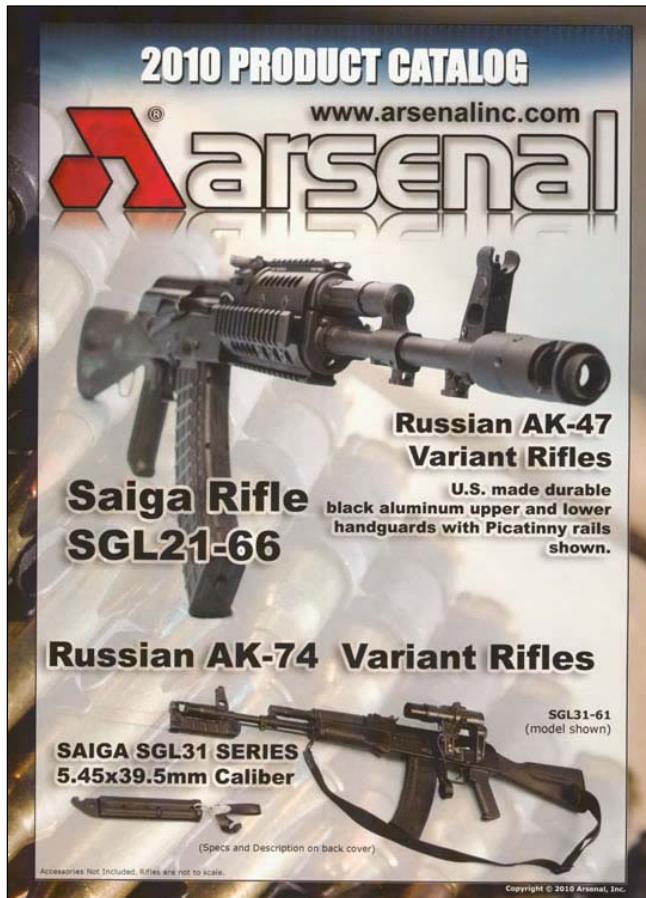




Understanding the Saiga AK-74 Assault Rifle Used in the Dallas Police Shooting



SAIGA HI-CAP SEMI-AUTO RIFLE w/ PLASTIC FURNITURE

- Cal. 5.45x39mm • Chrome line barrel • Side mount rail
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Issue: January 2014

KALASHNIKOV USA

The AK74 Synthetic Stock Saiga® upgrade features an impact resistant polymer stock, forend and pistol grip. Outfitted to authentically represent the original Kalashnikov AK74 design and configured to accept traditional 30-round double stack magazines. The AK 74 Synthetic is available in 7.62 x 39 caliber. All required parts are 922(r) compliant.

SAIGA® RIFLE

AK74 WITH SYNTHETIC STOCK

KALASHNIKOV USA

SAIGA® RIFLE

Modern Folding Skeleton Stock Rifle. This AK74 variant updates the traditional folding stock model preferred by paratroopers and special operations units. The addition of an adjustable length folding skeleton stock allows for use in urban and COB conditions. The CAA stock tube can be folded to either side of the receiver and accepts all AR15 commercial stocks. Included is CAA's new skeletonized stock with rubberized overmolded cheekpiece and unique length locking mechanism to eliminate inadvertent length adjustments. The stock tube is horizontally positioned to provide proper access to the sights and the length can be adjusted to accommodate NATO users. The grooved rubber butt pad is removable. Modernization is completed with a new set of 4 and 6 position Picatinny rail segments and 6 interchangeable rubberized finger grooves and backstraps on the pistol grip. The Modern Folding Skeleton Stock Rifle allows the addition of all Picatinny rail mounted accessories so this reliable 922(r) compliant firearm can accommodate any mission.

MODERN FOLDING SKELETON STOCK RIFLE

SAIGA IZ 240 AK 74 RIFLE

ATLANTIC FIREARMS LLC

The Saiga AK-74 Assault Rifle

On Thursday, July 7, 2016, Micah Johnson opened fire with a Russian-made Saiga AK-74 assault rifle at a peaceful protest rally in Dallas that left five law enforcement officers dead and nine injured, as well as injuring two private citizens, in the most deadly attack on law enforcement since 9/11. In 2014, according to an analysis by the Violence Policy Center, one in five law enforcement officers slain in the line of duty were killed with an assault weapon.ⁱ



In addition to the Saiga assault rifle equipped with high-capacity detachable ammunition magazines, Johnson was reportedly also carrying a Glock pistol and a Fraser 25 caliber pistol. Johnson had reportedly bought an AK-style assault rifle for \$600 in 2014 in a private sale arranged through Facebook with the transfer taking place at a Target parking lot, although it is not clear whether it was the weapon used in the Dallas attack. Johnson told the seller that he wanted the assault rifle because he missed the firepower of such rifles since returning to the U.S. from serving in Afghanistan.

The Saiga AK-74 is a classic assault rifle and incorporates many of the characteristics that make this category of firearm so lethal and distinguish it from sporting rifles (see later section *Key Points About Assault Weapons*).

The Saiga is made in Russia by Concern Kalashnikov,ⁱⁱ the manufacturer of the infamous AK-47 assault rifle. The AK-74 is a modernized version of the AK-47. The gun was imported by a variety of U.S. importers until imports were banned by economic sanctions imposed on Russia on July 16, 2014. The sanctions did not prohibit the future transfer of Kalashnikov products legally in the U.S. at the time the restrictions were imposed. Similar Bulgarian-made AK-74 rifles remain on the U.S. market.

This backgrounder offers a brief overview of the Saiga AK-74, as well as key points about assault weapons and what makes them different from standard hunting and sporting firearms.

High Demand for Russian Assault Weapons in the U.S.

Saiga AK-74 assault rifles were brought into the U.S. by a variety of importers, including Kalashnikov USA, until 2014 when the economic sanctions were imposed. Prior to the sanctions, demand for Saigas was so strong that the Izhmash factory that made Kalashnikov rifles and shotguns shifted its focus from military to civilian manufacture in 2011 and 2012 with sales of civilian Saigas rising by 50 percent in 2011. By 2013, the United States accounted for 40 percent of Concern Kalashnikov's total gun sales. In 2014, Concern Kalashnikov announced that it planned to sell 200,000 guns annually in the U.S.^{iii iv v}

The image consists of two side-by-side catalog pages. On the left is the '2010 PRODUCT CATALOG' for Arsenal, featuring several models of Saiga and Russian AK variant rifles. Key models shown include the Saiga Rifle SGL21-66, Russian AK-74 Variant Rifles, and the SAIGA SGL31 SERIES 5.45x39.5mm Caliber. The right side shows a page from Century International Arms Inc. catalog, specifically for the SAIGA HI-CAP SEMI-AUTO RIFLE w/ PLASTIC FURNITURE. It includes a detailed description of the rifle, contact information for Century International Arms Inc., and images of the AK74 with synthetic stock and the modern folding skeleton stock rifle.

As one gun magazine noted in 2013, “For those looking to add an interesting Kalashnikov variant to their collection, the AK-74 makes for a great candidate. Representing a highly refined, latter-day version of the classic AK rifle, the AK-74 gives you a chance to go hands-on with a weapon design from the final years of the Cold War.”^{vi}

“Clouds on the Horizon”

Like virtually all assault weapon manufacturers and importers, Saigas are marketed by Kalashnikov USA featuring military imagery.



In its 2015 catalog, Kalashnikov USA (which as RWC Group LLC (RWC) had imported Concern Kalashnikov assault weapons) described the impact of the sanctions on its marketing plans:

2014 has been both a very exciting and challenging year for RWC and Concern Kalashnikov. After working with Izhmash for over two years, and building relationships with our customers, RWC Group LLC was given the opportunity to become the exclusive U.S. importer and distributor of products under the Concern Kalashnikov marketing brand umbrella, including the Izhmash and Baikal product lines. By April, we were able to achieve one of our many goals of delivering 922(r) compliant rifles and shotguns based on the AK-47 design to meet the increasing US market's demands. In Russia, the factories were entering a period of modernization to meet the increased worldwide demand....

But then, noting “Clouds on the Horizon,” Kalashnikov USA lamented in its catalog:

World events overtook the center stage, overwhelming our successful cooperation with our partners. Ukraine’s crisis led President Obama to impose economic sanctions against a few sectors of the Russian economy, including Concern Kalashnikov. As of July 16, 2014, no further imports of the beloved Saiga rifles, shotguns, and other fine sporting firearms from Izhmash are to be allowed into the United States.

Reassuring the reader that in “2015 – The Future is Clear,” the catalog text continued:

The change in U.S. foreign policy has forced us to redefine our business model, going from one of an importer to a U.S. manufacturer of the iconic products that are rooted in world history and have earned a legendary reputation of reliability and simplicity of design.

Models of AK-74 rifles offered in the catalog include the AK74 with Synthetic Stock, “Outfitted to authentically represent the original Kalashnikov AK74 design and configured to accept traditional 30 round double stack magazines,” and the Synthetic Folding Steel Stock Rifle, which:

combines the traditional style steel skeleton side folding stock with the standard AK74 type forend and pistol grip. This results in an easily transportable unit with an overall length of only 38” and a collapsed length of 29”. The stock locks against the body. This classic side folder is the choice of Paratroopers and special operations.

Key Points About Assault Weapons

- 1. Semiautomatic assault weapons like the Saiga AK-74 are civilian versions of military assault weapons.** Even though the gun industry prefers to call semiautomatic assault weapons “modern sporting rifles,” there are no significant differences between them and military assault weapons.
- 2. Military assault weapons are selective-fire.** That is, they are capable of fully automatic fire—or three-shot bursts—as well as semiautomatic fire. A machine gun will continue to fire as long as the trigger is held down until the ammunition magazine is empty.
- 3. Civilian assault weapons are *not* machine guns.** They are semiautomatic weapons. (Since 1986 federal law has banned the sale to civilians of new machine guns.) The trigger of a semiautomatic weapon must be pulled separately for each round fired. It is a mistake to call civilian assault weapons “automatic weapons” or “machine guns.”
- 4. This is a distinction without a difference in terms of killing power.** Civilian semiautomatic assault weapons incorporate all of the functional design features that make assault weapons so deadly. They are arguably more deadly than military versions, because most experts agree that semiautomatic fire is more accurate than automatic fire.
- 5. The distinctive “look” of assault weapons is not cosmetic. It is the visual result of specific functional design decisions.** Military assault weapons were designed and developed for a specific military purpose—laying down a high volume of fire over a wide killing zone.
- 6. Civilian assault weapons keep the specific functional design features that make this anti-personnel function easy.** These functional features also distinguish assault weapons from traditional sporting guns.
- 7. The most significant assault weapon functional design features are: (1) ability to accept a detachable high-capacity ammunition magazine; (2) a rear pistol or thumb-hole grip; and, (3) a forward grip or barrel shroud.** Taken together, these are the design features that make possible the deadly and indiscriminate “spray-firing” for which assault weapons are designed. None of them are features of true hunting or sporting guns.

8. Although the gun lobby today argues that there is no such thing as civilian assault weapons, the industry, the National Rifle Association, and gun magazines enthusiastically described these civilian versions as “assault rifles,” “assault pistols,” and “military assault” weapons to boost civilian sales throughout the 1980s. The industry and its allies only began to use the semantic argument that a “true” assault weapon is a full-auto machine gun after civilian assault weapons turned up in large numbers in the hands of drug traffickers, criminal gangs, mass murderers, and other dangerous criminals.

ⁱ “New Data Shows One in Five Law Enforcement Officers Slain in the Line of Duty Felled by an Assault Weapon,” Violence Policy Center, May 16, 2016 (<http://www.vpc.org/press/new-data-shows-one-in-five-law-enforcement-officers-slain-in-the-line-of-duty-felled-by-an-assault-weapon/>).

ⁱⁱ Concern Kalashnikov is also known as Kalashnikov Concern.

ⁱⁱⁱ “Importing Russia’s Top Gun,” *The New York Times*, August 14, 2012.

^{iv} “Kalashnikov, Maker of AK-47, Looks to Rebrand,” *The New York Times*, June 6, 2016.

^v “Russia’s Kaslashnikov Plans to Sell 200,000 Guns in US Annually,” *Rianovosti*, January 13, 2014.

^{vi} “Bulgarian AK-74 5.45x39mm,” *The AK-47 & Soviet Weapons*, 2013.