

SKS Assault Rifles: A Menace to Law Enforcement

The SKS assault rifle, like the one reportedly used in the June 14, 2017 attack on a Congressional baseball game practice that left five wounded including House Majority Whip Steve Scalise and two Capitol Police officers, is the predecessor to the AK-47 assault rifle and uses the same 7.62 x 39mm ammunition as the AK-47. The SKS is also notoriously easy to convert to full-auto fire.¹



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According to the Paladin Press book *Full-Auto Conversion of the SKS Rifle*, “In the first few years of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, the Viet Cong were mainly armed with the SKS rifle, and they used it to horrific effect. In fact, for sniping operations, the SKS, particularly when equipped with a scope, was much preferred to the AK-47 by Viet Cong and NVA soldiers....”

As seen in the table below, from 1998 through 2015, 23 law enforcement officers were killed in the line of duty with SKS assault rifles. In six of those incidents bullets fired from the SKS rifles penetrated the officers’ vests.²

In a 2002 report issued by the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the SKS was described at the time as “the rifle model most frequently encountered by law enforcement officers.”³

The ATF report noted that “these high capacity rifles pose an enhanced threat to law enforcement, in part because of their ability to expel projectiles at velocities that are capable of penetrating the type of soft body armor typically worn by the law enforcement officers.”

¹ The 1994 Paladin Press book *Full-Auto Conversion of the SKS Rifle* states, “Basically, all you need to create a full-auto-only SKS rifle is to grind a spot off the hammer and place some metal shims in the bottom of the trigger housing using a little epoxy. The hammer grinding can be done with a hand file (if that’s all you have).”

² Information obtained from the FBI through Freedom of Information Act requests and Summaries of Officers Killed, Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted, FBI, 1998 – 2015.

³ Department of the Treasury, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, *Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative*, July 2002.

Law Enforcement Officers Killed in the Line of Duty by SKS Assault Rifles, 1998 Through 2015 as Reported by the Federal Bureau of Investigation					
Year	State	Manufacturer	Model	Caliber	Vest Penetrated?
1998	Oregon	Norinco	SKS	7.62mm	Yes
	Florida	Unknown	SKS	7.62mm	
	Colorado	Unknown	SKS	7.62mm	
	Indiana	Norinco	SKS	7.62mm	
1999	Indiana	Norinco	SKS	7.62mm	
2001	Michigan	Unknown	SKS	7.62mm	Yes
	Texas	Norinco	SKS	7.62mm	
	Utah	Norinco	SKS	7.62mm	
2002	South Carolina	Century Arms	SKS	7.62mm	
	South Carolina	Century Arms	SKS	7.62mm	
2004	Alabama	Norinco	SKS	7.62mm	Yes
	Alabama	Norinco	SKS	7.62mm	
	Alabama	Norinco	SKS	7.62mm	
	North Carolina	Norinco	SKS	7.62mm	
	Tennessee	Norinco	SKS	7.62mm	
2005	California	Norinco	SKS	7.62mm	Yes
2008	Pennsylvania	Norinco	SKS	7.62mm	
2009	California	Unknown	SKS	7.62mm	
	California	Unknown	SKS	7.62mm	
2010	Texas	Unknown	SKS	7.62mm	
2011	Michigan	Norinco	SKS	7.62mm	Yes
2012	California	Norinco	SKS	7.62mm	Yes
2015	Colorado	Unknown	SKS	7.62mm	

For more information, please contact Violence Policy Center Legislative Director Kristen Rand at 202-822-8200 x102 or krand@vpc.org.

The Violence Policy Center is a national educational organization working to stop gun death and injury in America. For more information, please visit www.vpc.org.