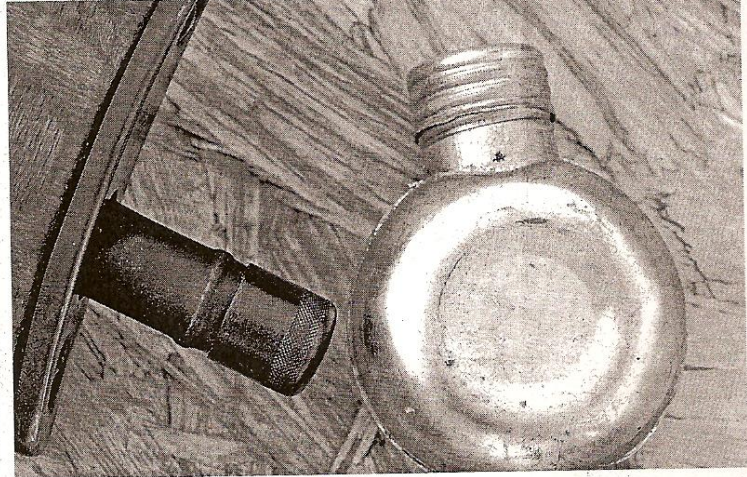


The standard ComBloc rail, mounted to the left side of the receiver, can accept many of optical sights, including the Kobra "red dot" sight issued to Russian personnel.



The AK buttstock cleaning kit contains a bristle bore brush and jag tip for the cleaning rod under the barrel and a combination tool that permits adjustment of the front sight post and a punch for disassembly of the bolt group, as well as a screwdriver.

However, there's usually no free lunch and these pistol grips usually display a great deal of scuffing as a consequence of changing magazines during stress environments. These vertical pistol grip forearm have been deleted from ROMARM AKMs of current manufacture and replaced by a conventional Soviet-type AKM forearm. When the folding stock version (originally a conventional AK47-type down-folder) was introduced in the late 1970s, the pistol grip—to its further detriment—was given a slightly rearward curve.

The rifle sent to SHOTGUN NEWS for test and evaluation was fitted with a fixed stock made of laminated beech, as was the forward-curving pistol-grip forearm—both reinforced with steel pins. The top handguard was made from stained beech. The pistol grip, in the standard Soviet AKM configuration, was made from injection-molded black plastic. The rifle was equipped with a standard Romanian brown leather sling.

The overall length of the rifle is 34.5 inches (876mm). The weight, empty and without a magazine, is 6.92 pounds (3.14kg). The barrel length is 16.3 inches (414mm). The barrel has four-groove rifling with a 1:9.45 right-hand twist.

The front sight, a round post-type, provided with protective ears, is rotated up or down to adjust for elevation zero. To move the point of impact up, the front sight post must be moved down and vice versa, using the appropriate front sight tool. Horizontal zero is adjusted by drifting it to the right or left in its base. This is usually done by means of a special armorer's tool or brass hammer, however, our test specimen could be moved by hand. Again, to move the point of impact to the right, the sight must be moved to the left and vice versa.

The rear sight, a sliding tangent-type with an open U-notch and with elevation adjustments in 100-meter increments from 100 to 1,000 meters, cannot be adjusted for zero. The rearmost setting on the elevation scale is marked with a Cyrillic "P" and is the battle sight setting, which is the equivalent of 300 meters.

Selector markings on Romanian AKMs are "S" for safe, "FA" for full-auto fire and "FF" for semiautomatic. Our test rifle is marked "S" for safe and "F" for semi-automatic.

Century Arms offers a number of accessories for these Romanian AKM-type rifles, including wire-cutter-type bayonets. A slot in the Romanian AKM bayonet's blade (with a clipped Bowie point shape) can be inserted over a lug on the bottom of the scabbard to form a scissors-like wire cutter with the back edge of the blade and a steel projection on the bottom of the scabbard. To gain the required leverage, the bayonet should be mounted on the rifle and employed in a manner similar to the barbed-wire cutters fitted to the British SMLE rifle during World War I.

The blades are satin-chrome-plated and most, but not all, have a row of sawteeth along the back edge. This latter feature is of dubious value. There is no fuller (the so-called "blood groove"). All of these bayonets have a single muzzle ring at one end of the crosspiece and a hook at the other end for opening bottles and attaching a wrist strap that passes through a hole in the pommel. When attached to the rifle, the blade's cutting edge is uppermost in the Czech/Austro-Hungarian manner.

There are two distinct models of the Soviet AKM bayonet. The earliest, or 1st pattern, had a steel scabbard with a matte-black paint finish. The scabbard was equipped with a rubber insulator that was grasped when cutting through electrical wire. Fitted to the hilt were plastic (reinforced with wood chips) grips with a large, bulbous pommel. All Romanian AKM bayonets are of the 1st pattern type. The one sent to SGN was missing both the rubber insulator and wrist thong. A large brown/tan leather frog surrounds the scabbard around the area over the missing gray rubber insulator. The missing wrist strap is brown leather and the wood-fiber impregnated plastic grips are reddish brown.

The Romanian AKM sent to SGN for test and evaluation has a conventional ComBloc rail riveted to the left side of its receiver for mounting optical devices. Within the last five years so-called "red dot" sights have become de rigueur on modern military shoulder-mounted weaponry. The very best red dot sight you can attach to a rail-equipped Kalashnikov rifle is the Russian Kobra.

Manufactured by Motozavod Izhevsk "Axion," (website: www.cobra.guns.ru; e-mail: Cobrasights@izh.com) the Kobra is an open collimator sight currently in use by the Russian military. I prefer the second generation EKP-8-02 attached to a solid (previous models were skeletonized) side mount for an AK-type side-receiver-rail.

The Kobra provides extremely fast target acquisition of both static and moving targets. This version was developed as a consequence of experience gained fighting the Chechens. The EKP-8-02 comes equipped with a camouflage-pattern carrying pouch, coin-sized cell battery, special adjusting tool, cleaning cloth and instructional manual. The following 3-volt CR series batteries can be used to power the Kobra EKP-8-02: 2325, 2330, 2335, 2340 and 2345.

To power on the Kobra EKP-8-02, the operator simply rotates the switch on the right side of the unit counterclockwise. Pressing a button to the rear of the power switch sequentially offers the operator four red reticle patterns: T-bar, red dot over an arrow pointer, arrow pointer and red dot.

A rocker arm switch provides the operator with 16 brightness levels. Based upon requests from the Russian military, the windage adjustment knob has been moved to the right side of the Kobra body at the rear. The elevation knob remains on top of the unit's body at the rear. Other improvements include a slightly raised optical lens for an unobstructed field of view and improved weatherproofing. This is a battle-proven, rugged combat red dot sight.

We were also sent a well-used, two-cell magazine pouch with two blued steel 30-round magazines.

Also included was the ubiquitous ComBloc galvanized tin oil bottle and the buttstock cleaning kit that contains a bristle bore brush and jag tip for the cleaning rod under the barrel and a combination tool that permits adjustment of the front sight post and a punch for disassembly of the bolt group, as well as a screwdriver. The case of the cleaning kit can be used as a handle for the combination tool and its cap serves as a bore guide.

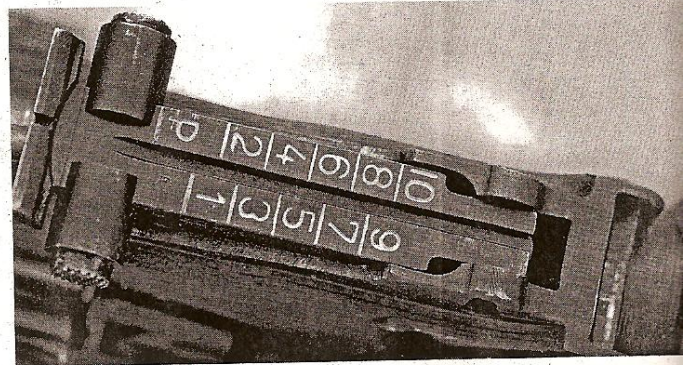
We also received a Romanian 75-round drum that was derived from the Soviet drum developed for the RPK squad machine gun. When originally fielded, the RPK was issued with a 40-round, staggered-column, detachable box-type magazine. When fired from the prone position off the bipod, the RPK would "monopod" on the extended magazine and lift off the bipod.

I examined dozens of 40-round magazines in Afghanistan and in every instance the magazine floorplate was badly scuffed. The 75-round drum almost doubled the magazine capacity and did not touch the ground when the weapon was fired off the bipod. It can also be attached to AK47 and AKM rifles, although it is somewhat difficult to reach the forearm with the support hand.

This drum is driven by a clockwork-type spring that is wound as the cartridges are loaded. When the cartridge is stripped from the drum by the forward traveling bolt, spring tension drives the next round against the drum's feed lips. A lever on the front of the drum must be pushed counterclockwise when inserting rounds into the drum. The loading lever must be released before the next round is inserted.

The RPK drum body, which is 7.1 inches (180mm) in diameter, is made of heavy gauge steel and is quite a bit more substantial than most drum magazines.

We fired several thousand rounds through the Romanian AKM sent to us for test and evaluation. There were no stoppages of any kind. The ammunition used in our test and evaluation of the Romanian AKM was imported by Wolf Performance



The sliding tangent-type rear sight, with an open U-notch, is adjustable for elevation only to 1000 meters in 100-meter increments. There is a battle sight setting (marked with a Cyrillic "P") just behind the 100-meter mark.