

The AK-47 – Kalashnikov series assault rifles

Osprey Weapon series No. 8 (2011)

By Gordon L. Rottman

Review by Jonathan Aird

The weapon series differs from most Osprey series in not having many drawing plates ó there are just two drawings in this book. Instead, there are dozens of colour photographs of various AK-47 models and variants in the hands of armed forces (and children) around the globe. The ubiquity of the AK-47 (or AK-series, 47 only identifies the first production variant) is starkly explained by the statistic that there are ~100 million which have been produced ó the next most common assault rifle is the M-16, which numbers around 8 million examples.

The book covers assault rifle development in the early 20th century, the AK-47 and its derivatives in detail, as well as good descriptions of the AK-74 and AK-100. There is an extensive section on users, combat examples and tactical doctrine for use ó the author served in the US Army for 26 years and had lengthy Special Forces experience; he speaks with plenty of authority. His descriptions of Vietnam-era firefights that he took part in bear witness to the ability of dozens of men to fire at each other at short range without any wounds on either side: rule writers take note! His AK-47 versus M-16 comparison is brutally blunt ó the AK-47 was better. His description of a field test of both weapons against Vietnam-era body armour also clearly illustrates the point.

This is a fascinating read about a weapon that the author describes as a òrite of passageö acquisition for young men in many parts of the world. Ripe with anecdote, it should be fuel to scenario and rule writers and the many pictures of individualised weapons should inspire the figure painter and convertor. Surprisingly useful!

