



# GUNSITE FOREIGN WEAPONS COURSE

***Hands-on experience with the weapons of the former USSR!***

***By Rich Grassi***

Photos by Gunsite Academy

**I**t's wise to know how to operate various firearms you may come into contact with while afield. In law enforcement operations, we found it necessary to hold a number of classes for crime scene and property room types to help us understand these firearms and how not to inadvertently fire one.



***Machine guns are fired for familiarization. The students must become sufficiently familiar with the weapons to be able to teach their use to foreign nationals.***

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**A range of Eastern Bloc weapons are studied, including various machine guns and the RPG rocket launcher.**



**A rack of school-owned AK-47 rifles are used for the Foreign Weapons course.**

For soldiers operating outside of the continental United States (CONUS), it would be a huge asset to do a “battlefield pickup” if a soldier’s own weapon failed. Soldiers working in an advisory and training mission for foreign troops should likewise be able to understand, demonstrate and operate the firearms of their allies. Finally, if a soldier is assigned to “battlefield cleanup” duty, it helps to know how to “clear and make safe” those recovered weapons. In keeping with such needs, Gunsite Academy offers the Foreign Weapons course.

In operation for 30 years, Gunsite Academy is commonly considered to be among the top firearms training venues in the world. Instructing from the doctrine of the late Jeff Cooper, including the *Modern Technique of the Pistol*, courses are offered in defensive pistol in several levels, as well as defensive riflery, hunting and open hand defense.

The Gunsite way is to do classroom sessions, along with range reinforcement, to cover issues regarding safety, range requirements, and

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the Modern Technique. The Modern Technique consists of the Combat Triad. The three elements are marksmanship, gunhandling and mindset.

Gunsite teaches the Weaver Stance as the basis of practical marksmanship. Presentation of the pistol, flash sight picture and the compressed surprise break of the trigger are staples. After the shot breaks, the shooter has to follow through and reset the trigger. The Gunsite Academy has shooters lower the piece to see the threat area, "look and assess." This method of breaking the tunnel vision often encountered during and immediately after life-threatening situations involves looking around before, after and during an assessment of the downed threat.

In this time of war, Gunsite Academy has been made available to our military service personnel to help them prepare for battle.

Gunsite Academy provides classroom instruction on the weapons they'll be examining and using during their five-day class. The weapons studied include the GLOCK pistol, common the world over, and Eastern Bloc guns: the AK-47 and variants, PKM machine gun, RPK, RPD, Krinkov, SVD rifle, RPG launcher and the Makarov pistol.

Gunsite provides the weapons and the ammunition used during the week.

The GLOCK pistol requires no real examination here. It's a locked breech, recoil operated, striker fired, 9x19mm pistol with a polymer receiver. It's used along with the Pistolet Makarova. The Makarov is a blow-back pistol that uses a trigger-cocking action for the first round from the holster. The GLOCK has the same trigger for each round fired.

The Mak is single-action after the first shot is fired. The action of the pistol cocks the hammer for the second and succeeding shots. It is chambered for the 9x18mm pistol. With a bullet diameter of about 9.3mm, the ammo isn't usable in a .380 ACP (9x17mm Browning) or 9x19mm (Parabellum) sidearm. The idea behind this is allegedly to prevent Western forces from seizing the ammo from disabled Eastern Bloc troops or their stockpiles to use in Western sidearms.

The AK-47 and variants are well known and commonly encountered worldwide. Chambered for the mid-powered 7.62x39mm cartridge, it's a simple to operate and maintain, reasonably hard-hitting carbine. The system's reliability is second to none. Its accuracy isn't always as good as we'd want, but it's good enough for the skill level the designer expected of the end user.

The Snayperskaya Vintovka Dragunova (SVD) sniper rifle is a gas



*The Gunsite Foreign Weapons course includes blocks of classroom instruction interspersed with range work.*



*This soldier charges to the next firing point while observing Rule Two (muzzle in safe direction) and Rule Three (finger off trigger and on frame).*



*Instruction includes loading, unloading, disassembly and assembly of various Eastern Bloc weapons.*

operated, magazine fed semiautomatic rifle designed by Evgeniy Fedorovich Dragunov. Chambered for a powerful cartridge, the 7.62x54mm R, the SVD is fed from a 10-round magazine and features a telescopic sight along with iron sights. It is the Russian GI precision rifle for platoon-level shooters.

The machine guns learned are the PKM, RPK and the RPD. The PKM is a product improved PK (Pulemyot Kalashnikova). One of Russia's greatest gun designers, Kalashnikov, completed a new machine gun design was called for by Soviet military planners. The

PK/PKM fires the rimmed 7.62x54mm Russian round.

A belt-fed machine gun, the PK/PKM is a light MG. It's available as the PKS/PKMS when it's tripod mounted. Fitted up as a solenoid fired armored car coaxial MG, it's known as the PKT. It's found in the T-72 and T-80 battle tanks.

The RPK is a light machine gun chambered for the lower-power 7.62x39mm. It replaced the RPD LMG as the Soviet infantry's SAW.

## Training Schedule

The course was designed to be a military-only offering by Gunsite. It's still a limited enrollment operation. Now available to military, law enforcement and contractors headed overseas, the Foreign Weapon course is a "train the trainer" operation. Many of the troops trained at Gunsite have trained foreign troops in the use and care of the weapons they have.

They use the weapons they've been able to acquire for the class. Their SVD is a Romanian variant, the PSL. Very similar to the Soviet rifle, the PSL has a stamped sheet metal receiver. The Dragunov's is milled.

The PSL operates along the lines of the AK/AKM system, the gas piston is part of the bolt carrier and runs a long stroke, unlike the shorter stroke of the SVD. The other differences are minor.

Classroom sessions on loading, unloading, disassembly and re-assembly, cleaning, care and maintenance were interspersed with range work. The students in this class mostly become teachers overseas. They have to know their material.

The class range activities begin on a square range. They start with the secondary weapon first, the handgun. The GLOCK and Makarov are used. This is followed by the AK. The belt-feds come along later in the week, as does the AKM and Krinkov for some full-auto firing.

The only simulator used in the Foreign Weapons class is the Scrambler. This course of fire has the user bolt from cover to cover, identifying a target at each firing point and engaging it. Identifying and hitting the target, making good use of cover and the time it takes to run the course combine to determine the best operator. The Scrambler is run with the AK-47.

In the Gunsite tradition, there is a shoot-off on the last day of class. In fact, the Foreign Weapons class is populated by hard-charging US military types. This leads to an impromptu shoot-off at the end of each day in addition to the one at the end of the class.

The SVD/PSL is shot at 100 and 200 yards. Familiarization fire with the AK-47 goes out to 100 yards. An objective is to learn how the gun works. In the case of the precision rifle, another objective is to determine how the scope sight ranges.

The Eastern Bloc weapons aren't altogether foreign to US users. One difference is the lack of a bolt stop in the AK-47. The AKs grounded at the range, there was a cartridge case protruding from the ejection ports. These weren't stoppages.

They are there to let others know the pieces are "safed." The magazine is out, the chamber is clear and the bolt is held open with brass.

What is the course of fire for the RPG? Well, there isn't one. A demilled sample is available for inspection. A PowerPoint presentation shows the students what they need to know about teaching the RPG—and how to use it, if needed.

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