

SKS Assault Rifles: A Menace to Public Safety

The SKS assault rifle is the predecessor to the AK-47 assault rifle and uses the same 7.62 x 39mm ammunition as the AK-47.



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Past high-profile attacks that have involved SKS assault rifles include:

- A June 2017 attack on a Congressional baseball game practice in Alexandria, Virginia that left five wounded, including then-House Majority Whip Steve Scalise and two Capitol Police officers.
- A November 2015 shooting at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs, Colorado where one police officer and two civilians were killed.
- A March 2009 shooting in Oakland, California that left four victims dead.
- A March 2009 series of shootings at multiple locations in southern Alabama that left 10 victims dead.
- A November 2004 attack at a hunting camp in Birchwood, Wisconsin that left six victims dead and three wounded.

The SKS also poses a grave threat to law enforcement. As documented in the table on the following page, from 1998 through 2021, 27 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 were known to have penetrated the officers' vests.¹

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."²

¹ Information obtained from the FBI through Freedom of Information Act requests and Summaries of Officers Killed, Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted, FBI, 1998 – 2021.

² 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 2021 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	
2016	Mississippi	Russian	SKS	7.62mm	
2019	Michigan	Norinco	SKS	7.62mm	
2020	Missouri	Unknown	SKS	7.62mm	
2021	Tennessee	Norinco	SKS	7.62mm	

The same 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.”

The SKS is also notoriously easy to convert to full-auto fire.³ 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....”

For more information, please contact Violence Policy Center Government Affairs 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.

³ 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).”