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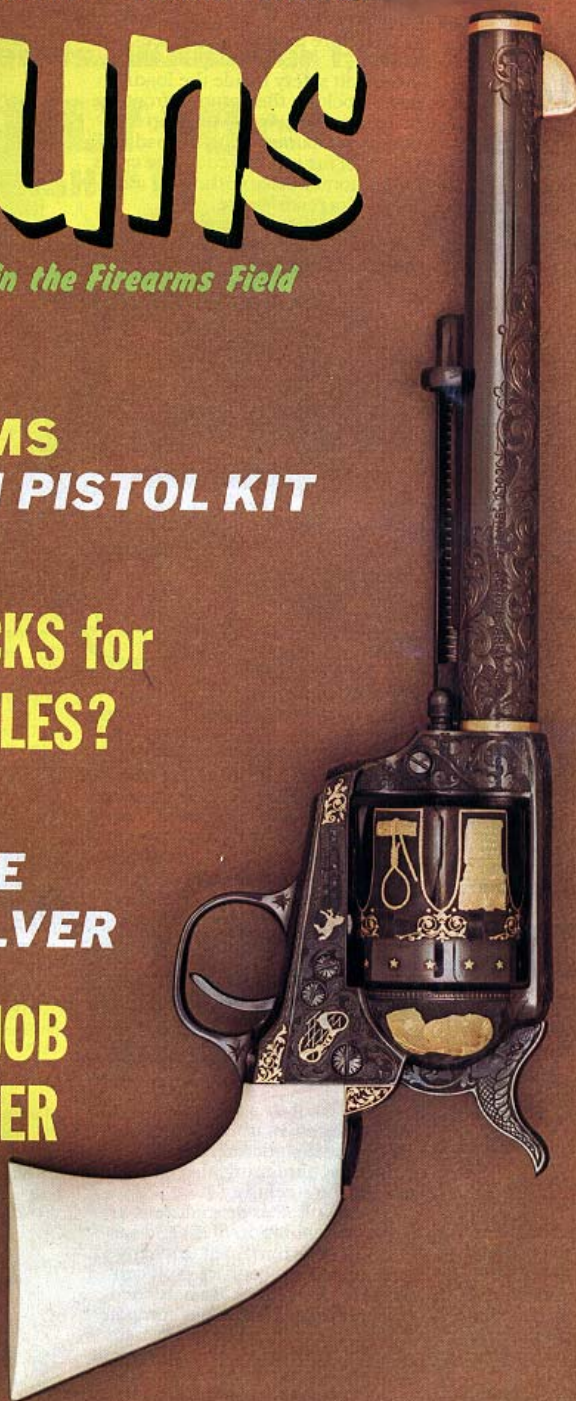
*(DETAILS INSIDE)*

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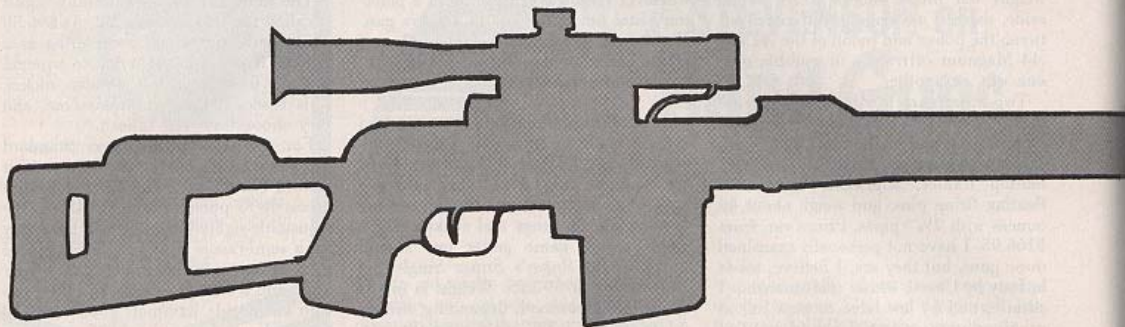


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# THE \$25,000 SOVIET



## Author's Note:

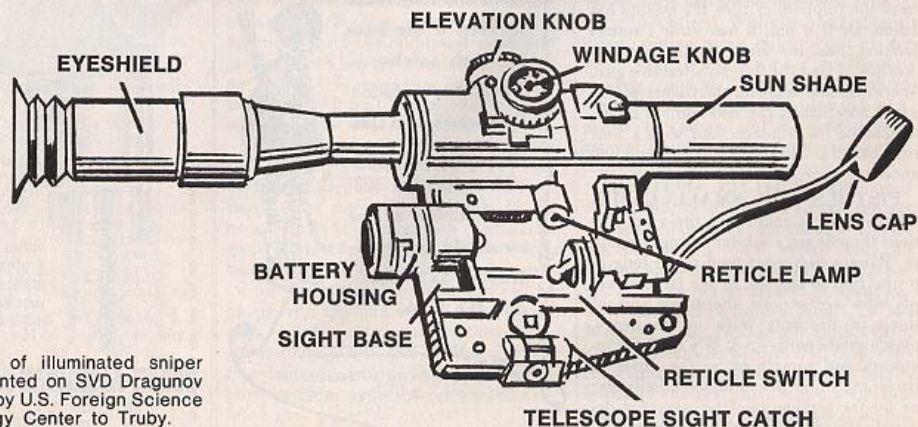
This article was written early in 1975; since then, the following has occurred:

I received a telephone call from a foreign national—one of my sources for this article. He told me that two of these rifles may already be in the West. They are to be brought into the U.S. via diplomatic pouch from the present host nation to a neutral country, then to an ally, then to the U.S. They will probably go to the U.S. Army Technical Intelligence Branch, then to the Foreign Science and Technology Center—a CIA-related organization—for study. According to my source, the rifles were tested in the host country and, "They are not all that hot over 300 meters. Actually, the models appear to be designed more as brush than long range weapons."

By J. DAVID TRUBY

Would you pay \$25,000 for a ten year old military rifle? The CIA, NATO, and other western intelligence agencies will start bidding at that minimum price if you come up with the right weapon. Just turn in an authentic Soviet SVD sniper rifle and after their verification, the reward is yours. But, don't hop up out of your arm chair, as the real James Bonds have been after that prize for a decade now, with no takers. That is how tough Soviet security can be.

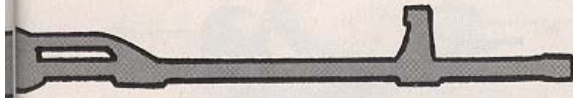
Known popularly as the "Dragunov," the SVD has been around as a super sniper rifle for ten years. Yet, no known photo exists in the free world, let alone the real thing. Its only likeness is various artist sketches based on the descriptions of military and intelligence defectors from the USSR, plus second hand reports from our own intelligence sources. The Soviets add to the confusion by leaking phoney descriptions to deny credibility to western intelligence.



Detail sketch of illuminated sniper scope as mounted on SVD Dragunov rifle provided by U.S. Foreign Science and Technology Center to Truby.



# MYSTERY RIFLE



Very recently, though, a western agent who works on a contract basis brought in his own eye witness report and first hand sketch of the Dragunov. There are some differences between the weapon he actually saw and the bare minimum of available information in this country. Very little of this basic information has been made public to date. This article will change that.

According to a technical expert at the Foreign Science and Technology Center, an Army and CIA ordnance facility, this weapon is a "hybrid semiautomatic rifle which probably rates near the top of high quality match grade rifles." Actual comparison is impossible, of course, until someone gets a specimen into the West for testing and study.

Little is known about the rifle's actual use, although there is some recently declassified evidence that the Dragunov was in limited use in Vietnam. One Army after-action report cites the appearance of "what was definitely a Soviet SVD sniper piece fired and seconded by Caucasians in native clothing . . . disguised as Vietnamese. Other Caucasians speaking Russian provided security for the sniper team which operated with North Vietnamese units sporadically in 1970 and 1971."

Another report, which I was unable to verify, had a Dragunov in Soviet hands during the siege of Khe Sahn in 1968. A Marine officer told me that after snipers had killed two Marines, a countersniper team went out. Their observer saw Caucasians with the rifle and his description matched that of the SVD. One of the Soviet officers was wounded by the American countersniper team.

When I told this to an Army Special Forces officer who was a sniper expert in Vietnam, he was awed, saying, "That was a helluva risk for them to allow a couple officers that close to action with an SVD. They must have wanted to field test something or someone pretty damn badly."

He reported that a CIA agent had told him that the Soviets do not allow the SVD out of their country unless it is accompanied by the firing team (two Russian officers), plus a backup man, ranking intelligence officer, plus a security team. It is, he said, quite a mystery rifle.

The Dragunov was developed at the Scientific Research Station and Proving Grounds of the Central Council of Oscaviakhim, according to the latest intelligence report brought in by the contract agent. This secret facility is located near Moscow with a testing branch at Anapa in the Crimea. He says the rifle looks somewhat like a cross breeding of their SKS carbine and the AK-47 assault rifle, only longer and bigger. He adds that it has "a fantastic amount of new-generation accuracy built in."

The gas-operated rifle was first adopted in 1964, although the prototype had been under development since 1960, according to one classified report I saw several years ago. The new report verified this.

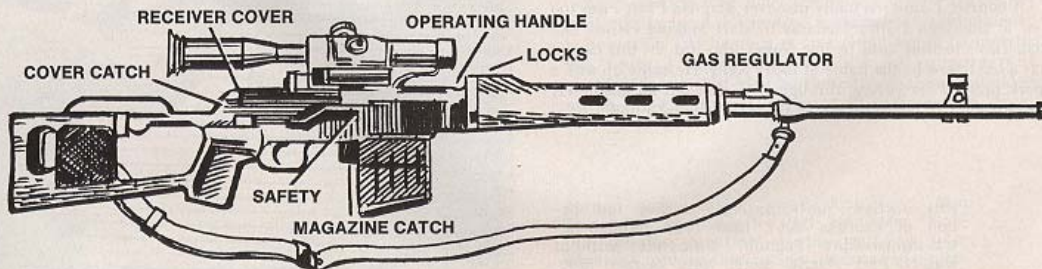
The receiver, bolt, and bolt carrier are machined from solid stock. Its action is shortstroke, with the piston moving little more than half an inch. The wood portions are birch in which the stock has been hollowed to cut the weight of the rifle by nearly a pound. Other technical details from the agent's eyewitness report are enlightening.

Although the various reports about the Dragunov list a range of vital statistics, this latest intelligence has the SVD in at 48.2 inches long with a 24-inch barrel. It weighs 9.5 pounds with its 10-round box magazine loaded. It is a little longer than the U.S.'s old M1 rifle with the same weight.

The rifle seen by our agent carried an illuminated, auto-ranging 4-power telescope which would enable an expert marksman to engage targets at nearly a half-mile range. He noted, though, that the normal sniping range for this weapon is 200 to 600 meters.

*(Continued on page 73)*

Official U.S. Foreign Science and Technology Center sketch showing some heretofore unknown details of the Soviet SVD Dragunov mystery sniper rifle.





## KAUTZKY GUNS

(Continued from page 49)

burgeoning master gunsmith to cure their ailing fowling pieces. So, Kautzky laid aside the unfinished receiver of his, now known to be, last handmade gun, never to take it up again. Thus, unfortunately, ended the line of genuine Kautzky doubles.

At this point in time Joseph Sr. began to puzzle out the problems inherent in the then existing single trigger designs, all of which were either undependable or prohibitively fragile. Once more he applied himself with the same determination and expertise with which he had produced only a few exquisitely crafted doubles. The result came to be known then as the Kautzky Single Trigger of 1910, an entirely practical and trouble-free single trigger destined to become the standard for many decades. Though the patent and subsequent rights to the design went from hand to hand and has, eventually, reappeared under various tradenames, all these inexorably trace their lineage back to Joseph Kautzky's original design.

The design was, of course, a significant step toward the perfection of the contemporary double shotgun, but one can only wonder what further works of gunmaking magic Kautzky might have performed if he had remained simply an unknown, but magnificently gifted rural gunsmith.

As it stands today, we have all too few examples of Kautzky's genius. The Kautzky family has over the years attempted to reclaim those one-of-a-kind guns. The photos accompanying this piece are taken of the only two guns that have emerged from obscurity. Somewhere, perhaps shrouded in a shameful coating of rust, or resting somnolent under a sheet of decades old dust and debris, perhaps in *your* attic, there may reside one of these true pieces of gunmaking art.

If you chance upon an old double that really stirs your soul, look at it very carefully as you cradle it in your hands. The lockplate may just carry a neatly inscribed legend—"J. KAUTZKY", the sole hallmark of one of gunmaking's brightest lights.

## MYSTERY RIFLE

(Continued from page 21)

His description and the others all agree on one point—the excellent quality and finish of each SVD, as opposed to the usual rough quality of Soviet military weapons. He inferred that the Dragunov is individually produced, rather than mass manufactured.

The Dragunov fires the same 7.62mmx54 cartridge the Soviets use in the International Rifle Matches, no doubt because the accuracy of this round is excellent. Yet, the agent also noted that some SVD rifles have been modified as "jungle use models." Basically, they use the 9 x 54 cartridge because its fine brushbusting characteristics. It is probable these modified weapons were the ones used in Vietnam.

Although a prong-type flash hider of the style used on FN rifles is issued for the Dragunov, a newly developed silencer is also available. According to the intelligence report, this new silencer is simply a modified version of the one used with the M1891/30 sniper rifle of WWII and Korea fame. "It is my belief that this silenced Dragunov is used primarily for KGB missions, rather than military sniping," the agent reported.

Although details of the KGB use

remain classified, it is thought Soviet agents have used the silenced Dragunov for assassination purposes. One unverified report I did see noted that at least one Dragunov was rumored to be in use during the trouble on Cyprus. The agent commented on the silenced rifle. "They are not quite as progressive with the military use of silenced sniping as the Americans," he noted. "Of course, their military snipers really did not have the run of Vietnam to test silenced rifles all that much, either."

The CIA had no comment on the \$25,000 minimum reward for a Dragunov rifle, while related government organizations will provide precious little supportive data. One Army officer did tell me, though, "The government's reward aside, the value of the first Dragunov brought to the U.S. would be enormous . . . many, many thousands of dollars."

Of course, to the professional agent whose job it would be to babysit this first Dragunov, the price could be much higher. As the man who brought in this latest and most detailed report told me, "The Soviets play high stakes on security for this rifle, and you can bet your life on that!"

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