

'One-Handed' AK-47 Replacement Unveiled

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The Kalashnikov that has been designed to replace the iconic AK-47 was officially presented Tuesday, while engineers at the Izhmash plant in Udmurtia, where the weapon is made, said modifications are ongoing.

Izhmash was criticized for inefficiency last month by the Defense Ministry, which said it did not intend to buy any of the new A-12 models this year. Purchases of AK-47s will cease in 2012, the ministry said last year.

The new A-12 enjoys a number of innovations not carried by its illustrious forbear. One of the most talked-about modifications is that the new weapon can be fired without using both hands. It has been nicknamed "a weapon for the one-handed."

Firing tests are underway on the A-12 model, according to footage shown on state television channel Vesti.ru on Tuesday. "There is one aim: to create a simple and reliable automatic

weapon for the same tasks and [responding to] new demands," Izhmash director Maxim Kuzyuk said.

Tests are designed to probe the capabilities of the A-12, including its reliability, accuracy and ability to withstand sub-zero temperatures. They will continue throughout 2012.

The weapon was shown in January to Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, who is responsible for the country's military-industrial complex. In an apparent divergence with the Defense Ministry, the former ambassador to NATO highly praised the Kalashnikov brand.

The government has been engaged in a public battle with defense equipment suppliers over spiraling costs and poor-quality goods.

"It's not worth our military bosses having an argument with military science and industry in the media," Rogozin wrote on Twitter on Tuesday. "Something like that would be difficult to imagine in NATO."

The main competitor for the new weapon is the U.S.-made M16. Footage from Vesti.ru showed the M16 malfunctioning while the A-12 continued to fire after it had been dropped onto the ground.

Rogozin said last month that the effectiveness of the Kalashnikov brand was proven by requests for the weapon by the Afghan army, despite a huge U.S. military presence in their country.

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