

Construction of Kalashnikov Factories in Venezuela Behind Schedule

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Construction is falling behind schedule on factories to manufacture the famed Kalashnikov assault rifle in Venezuela, a senior military official said Wednesday.

The head of the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation, Alexander Fomin, blamed the delay on both the Venezuelan and the Russian sides, but said that the partners are "trying to make an effort to minimize the lag" and start producing a modernized version of the rifle, Interfax reported.

"Together with our Venezuelan partners, we are doing everything possible to complete the construction of the rifle and ammunition factories," Fomin said at an arms and security equipment exhibition in Moscow. "We are trying to do this as soon as possible."

Konstantin Busygin, who heads the Izhmash factory that produces Kalashnikovs in Russia, said last spring that the construction of the Venezuelan factories would be completed within a

year to 18 months.

Fomin didn't specify how much the latest delays might hold up production.

Venezuela is a major Russian arms customer, along with India, Algeria, China, Malaysia and Syria. In recent years, Russia has sold 100,000 modernized AK-103 rifles to Venezuela.

Moscow has been trying to restore its influence in Latin America after seeing its clout wane following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Besides exporting arms, Russian companies also have major stakes in oil production in the region.

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