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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia to Release Stamp for AK-47's Mikhail Kalashnikov

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An envelope with the 15-ruble Kalashnikov stamp.

Russia's federal stamp distributor will issue a commemorative stamp featuring the late Mikhail Kalashnikov, the legendary designer of the AK-47 assault rifle, Interfax news agency reported Wednesday.

A total of 374,000 stamps depicting Kalashnikov — who died last December at age 93 — as a Knight of the Order of St. Andrew will be put into circulation on Friday, according to the distributor.

Kalashnikov was awarded the Order of St. Andrew, Russia's oldest and highest honor, in October 1998.

The 15-ruble stamps will be unveiled in Moscow and in Kalashnikov's hometown of Izhevsk, in the Republic of Udmurtia, the report said.

"Stamps featuring the portraits of prominent people are usually released five years after their

death, but Mikhail Kalashnikov was an exception," said Vladimir Devyatov, the vice president of Russia's Philatelic Union, according to comments carried by Interfax.

"He is the only person in the country who became a Knight of the Order of St. Andrew, and who was also twice named a Hero of Socialist Labor and a Hero of the Russian Federation," he added.

Kalashnikov became a national icon and acquired worldwide fame for designing the AK-47 in 1947. The famous assault rifle is now used in many countries around the world.

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