

Russia Takes Aim at Foreign AK-47 Fakers

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Defense Ministry will focus on preparing legal claims against manufacturers of unlicensed copies of Russian military hardware.

The Defense Ministry is working on a system to keep track of Russian military innovations at home and abroad in an attempt to wrestle control of copyrights on Soviet-era equipment away from a global industry of imitators, state news agency RIA Novosti reported Wednesday.

"The copying of our exported military products is a very big problem," Defense Ministry official Oleg Vashchenko was quoted as saying.

The ministry will focus on preparing legal claims against manufacturers of unlicensed copies of Russian military hardware, who often use Soviet-era production facilities in former Warsaw Pact countries and even China.

"Of course, we can't scream that they were stolen from us," Vashchenko said. "We need

a civilized means to resolve legal issues, to establish a legal claim in defense of the interests of the state."

Russia is the second-largest arms exporter in the world, and the country's military-industrial complex makes a large portion of its income from overseas sales. Exported equipment can be sold at over two times the price given to the Russian Defense Ministry.

With an economic downturn squeezing the federal budget, the government has reduced spending in all areas except defense procurement this year. However, if the economic situation worsens, the defense industry may not be spared — leaving exports more important than ever.

One of the most copied Russian weapons is the iconic AK-47 rifle. When the U.S. sanctioned the weapon's Russian Kalashnikov manufacturer last year, gun owners in the United States found they could still get their hands on one of the many exact copies produced in Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Serbia and China.

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