

## Wide Angle



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## The Man, The Gun, and The Controversy

A 30 feet, or nine-metre, monument of a man with an assault rifle, was unveiled in Moscow this week, on Tuesday, 19 September 2017.

The man's name: Mikhail Kalashnikov.

The rifle's name: AK 47.

A few days ago, listening to a BBC news program on the controversy surrounding this statue, I thought I should do some study on this popular killing machine invented by Kalashnikov in 1947.

But first, let us look at the controversy.

The statue was being erected in one of the busiest and most commonly used streets of Moscow. And, many Muscovites protested saying it was not an appropriate place for a memorial to the gun maker.

Among the placards the protestors waved was one which said: 'a creator of weapons is a creator of death'.

In a news item, "30ft-high statue of Mikhail Kalashnikov unveiled in Moscow" (The Guardian, 19 September 2017), there is a mention of a lawyer-protestor saying: "I'm not, in principle, against a statue of Kalashnikov. But it should not be erected here, now, and in this shape."

Supporters of the monument, however, did not agree. "This is Russia's cultural brand," and "He created this weapon to defend his motherland," they argued.

But is it only being used for Russia's defence? Is it really a "cultural brand"? These are the questions the leaders of global arms trade must answer.

In 2015 alone, look at what these Kalashnikovs have done.

In Garissa, Kenya, 147 Christian students were killed in a university. In Paris, France, 130 were killed with bombs and guns at a music concert. In Sousse, Tunisia, 38 people were killed on a beach by a lone gun-attacker. In all these cases, it was the 'AK 47' assault rifle, or a rifle from its family, that the terrorists used. In the same year, even in the Charlie Hebdo attacks, and in the Copenhagen attack, it was the same weapon used.

In a short video I watched online, Michael Hodges, the author of the book, "AK 47: The People's Gun" says that, with just 7 moving parts, and with the capability to fire 100 rounds of ammunition, this automatic rifle "is simple enough for a child to use"!

Perhaps, that is why many child soldiers in Africa are being illegally recruited and trained to kill - with this lightweight assault rifle.

The World Bank estimated in 2007 that out of the 500 million total firearms available worldwide, 100 million are of the Kalashnikov family, and 75 million are AK-47s.

But the author Michael Hodges says there could be up to '200 million' of these assault rifles in the world. Mostly because of the illicit arms trade, that is not accounted for.

Investigators of recent terrorist attacks have concluded that the most terrorists acquired these assault rifles through black markets in Europe. In some African countries with civil wars, many legal firearms disappear, and make their way into gunrunners' hands.

Actually, many forms of Kalashnikovs are manufactured - legitimately, for international trade - in more than 30 countries. China is a leader, and it exports mostly to African nations.

But, sadly, in some African countries, many underpaid soldiers, apparently, sell their rifles for a pittance. And the rifles soon become illicit contraband, and not traceable.

Russia may be proud of its inventor today. And maybe we cannot begrudge Russia if it wants to erect a statue in honour of a man who helped the nation's arms trade.

But unless countries around the world have stricter gun control laws, these automatic assault rifles could be used for terror. And no killing or terror can justify a celebration.

(The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of this newspaper.)

# They made it!

## Conjoined twins set for university in Tanzania

Iringa, Tanzania

A pair of conjoined sisters are settling into campus life at a Tanzanian university, a first in a country where disabled people are often marginalised or abandoned at birth.

Maria and Consolata Mwakikuti, 20, who are joined at the abdomen, have become minor celebrities in the east African nation where the media have closely followed their path through high school and arrival at university earlier this month.

Mwazarau Mathola, spokeswoman for the Ruaha Catholic University in Iringa in the centre of the country, said on Thursday the women arrived a few weeks before classes start in October to get used to their new life and take computer lessons.

"A separate house has



Maria (L) and Consolata Mwakikuti as they react in the student hostel of Ruaha Catholic University

been provided for them, furnished and set up for their needs, because they can't be housed in normal student accommodation," said Mathola. A couch has been installed in their classroom to allow them to sit comfortably, and they have a carer.

The twins were abandoned by their mother after the death of their father, and later taken in by a Catholic mission. They will study education, with the hope of becoming teachers of history, English and Swahili, said Mathola. In July, Maria made an emotional call on

state television for parents not to "hide or lock up their handicapped children".

"They must know they human beings, handicapped or not, are equal and have the same rights," she said.

The sisters, who enjoy knitting and cooking together, thanked the teachers who helped them through highschool, as well as the government who provided a vehicle to take them from their home to school each day.

"We didn't expect this day to come, it is by the grace of God that we are here today," said Consolata, the chattier of the two. The sisters admit that they do not always get along, as Consolata told a local newspaper in 2015: "For example when I want to do laundry and Maria prefers to read. However we always find a way around it." (AFP)

## Missing Pets



**ROLLY** - Male, 1 yr, bent tail, brown eyes, all black, ran away when owner was out of country, not wearing collar or ID tag, owner has very special bond with Rolly, Isa Town (near Isa Town Club), 15/5/17. **33157048**



**SULTAN** - Male, 2 yrs, neutered, mostly white/ beige w darker patch on back and mouth, likely not wearing collar or ID, long sorted story - but said to possibly be at a farm in Saar and can't get straight answers, 21/4/17. **66339925**



**KIKI** - Male Persian, 4 mos, not wearing collar or ID tag, window left open - may have been stolen, East Riffa Buhair, 12/8/17. **34035660**



**KONG** - Male Rottweiler, 18 mos, micro-chipped, gate left open, may have been stolen, wearing gold colour chain collar - no ID, New Hidd (behind Khalifa bridge), REWARD for safe return, 18/4/17. **33008092**



**SUSHI** - Male Himalayan, 2-3 yrs, microchipped (but owner does not have data from previous owner), black nylon collar w tag bearing mobile number, eats only dry food, Tubli/Jidd Ali-Isa Town area, 1/7/17. **66950622**



**HATHFA** - Female Saluki, 5 yrs, injury mark on the top of right leg, wearing collar, lost in Hamala from a farm, gone missing around 8/4/17. **39247411**