

Kalashnikov Rifle-shaped Vodka Bottle, 2002

Gift of Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov of Russia to Secretary of State Colin Powell



A Kalashnikov-shaped bottle, filled with vodka and resting in a wooden Kalashnikov box, was a 65th birthday gift from Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov to Secretary Colin Powell on April 10, 2002. This gift shows that in diplomacy humor is as important as sharing a drink together.

In Russia, vodka is the symbol of camaraderie, encouraging the flow of conversation. While the communication may be friendly, a vodka bottle in the shape of the Kalashnikov rifle, called the AK-47, reminds us that Russia still retains military power. Mikhail T. Kalashnikov (b. 1919) perfected the AK-47 design during WW II and the Cold War. Today 30 million AK-47s are spread throughout more than 100 countries. In one case, its silhouette is emblazoned on a national flag; elsewhere, families may give baby boys the name "Kalash."

Less well known is that Mikhail Kalashnikov is founder and Honorary Chairman of the company that makes Kalashnikov Vodka, the prize-winning blend contained in this bottle, combining salt, sugar, vanilla, glycerin, and high quality grain. This bottle and box showcase two famous Russian products, vodka and the AK-47.



Map of Russia today



Mikhail Timofeevich
Kalashnikov



Secretary Colin Powell talks with
Russian Foreign Minister at the
UN in 2001