

The SKS Semiautomatic Assault Rifle

More than 300,000 SKS semiautomatic rifles were imported into the country in the late 1980's and early 1990's.³² They have proven to have major design and safety problems. Built primarily by the Chinese Defense Agency, these imported rifles can unexpectedly fire in full-automatic mode while being loaded without the trigger being pulled (See Rifles Appendix—Navy Arms). The SKS chambers the same round as the Soviet AK-47 assault rifle. In runaway full-automatic mode, the SKS can fire at the rate of more than 1,000 rounds a minute.

Winchester Model 94 Rifle

The Model 94 rifle was introduced in 1894 as Winchester's first lever-action gun designed for use with modern high-powered ammunition. Most commonly used as a deer-hunting rifle, more than 5,000,000 Model 94s have been produced to date.³³ These rifles can unintentionally discharge in at least three different ways: when half-cocked in the "safety" hammer notch; when moving the finger lever without touching the trigger; and during unloading.

The Model 94 is based on a 1860's lever-action design originally meant for rimfire ammunition. Made substantially the same until about 1992, early models of this rifle have no safety except for a half-cock position of the exposed hammer, which is supposed to keep the firing pin off the cartridge. The user is expected to carry the gun set this way, until prepared to fire—at which time he cocks the hammer fully back with his thumb and pulls the trigger. Many product liability cases were brought against Winchester when this half-cock failed in the field and the hammer fell forward discharging the gun. This would occur, for instance, when the exposed hammer caught on an obstruction like a branch or twig and was nudged out of the half-cock position and discharged the gun.³⁴ Later models of the Winchester 94 are now equipped with forms of manual safety.

The Remington Model 11 Semiautomatic Shotgun

More than 850,000 Remington 11s were made and sold from 1911 to 1948 and many are still currently in use. It has been found that fragile parts in the gun's action can break away, causing cartridges to be set off when ammunition is feeding into the chamber (See Shotgun Appendix). This sometimes results in the shotguns firing repeatedly until the shells in their magazines are exhausted. No pressure on the trigger is required for this firing to occur.

³² Melvin Claxton, "Firearm Defects Take Toll," *The Detroit News*, December 15, 2003. Retrieved from the Internet at <http://www.detroitnews.com/2003/specialreport/031216/a10-8000.htm> on January 21, 2005.

³³ *SHOOTING INDUSTRY*, March 1996.

³⁴ "Intentional vs. Accidental Shootings: A New Target?" *New Targets: An overview of Firearms Litigation*, 1999. Retrieved from the Internet at <http://p.findlaw.com/> on January 21, 2005.