

# ES: The U.S. M14 Rifle



“The M14 rifle was designed to replace the M1 Garand, the M1 Carbine, the M1918 Browning Automatic Rifle, and the M3/M3A1 submachine guns.”

replaced with unit-installed lockout knobs that would not allow full-auto fire.

Although the M14 was standardized in 1957, it took a while for the new weapon to be issued to the armed services. Springfield Armory delivered the first rifles in July 1959. The 101st Airborne Division was the only unit in the Army that had a full complement of M14s, and that was at the end of 1961. The Fleet Marine Force finalized their changeover in late 1962. I personally recall that my Army unit was not issued M14s until sometime in 1963. Thompson-Ramo-Wooldridge (TRW), Harrington and Richardson and Olin Mathieson Chemical Corporation (Winchester-Western Division) also began producing the M14 for issue. National Match M14s were built for rifle competition. These proved to be exceptionally accurate arms. Records indicate that 1.38 million M14s were procured for an average unit cost of \$104. Production ceased and Springfield Armory was ordered closed by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in 1968. Production equipment was sold to Taiwan, where the Type 57 rifle has been produced for the armed forces there. The 5.56mm M16 rifle began to be phased in as the “Standard A” rifle for our armed forces, relegating the M14 to limited-standard status. The Army converted some M14s into the scoped M21 sniper rifle. These were our standard sniper weapons until 1988. Some are still in service in Iraq and Afghanistan, where they continue to be quite effective. Navy Seals used scoped M14s in a recent Somali pirate incident to take out the bad guys with precision shooting. Standard and scope-modified M14s continue to be used as designated marksman rifles by our combat arms. The U.S. Marine Corps has developed its Designated

Marksman Rifle (DMR), an accuracy-modified M14, for use by security teams and scout snipers. The Marine rifle team uses M14s in competition.

The M14 acquitted itself well in Vietnam, where many servicemen remember it fondly and preferred it for its reliability and power over any other weapon. While a bit heavy and unwieldy in the brush, it had the power to penetrate foliage and inflict decisive damage on the enemy.

Civilian versions of the M14 made as semiauto-only have been produced by many commercial manufacturers and are currently available. The rifle illustrated was made by AR Sales, an early provider of these rifles, as the Mark IV in 1969. Other than the receiver, it’s equipped with all GI parts including a match barrel and an issue fiberglass stock. The most notable producer in recent years has been the modern commercial Springfield Armory of Geneseo, Illinois. Their standard rifle is called the M1A, and it’s used prolifically in rifle matches across the U.S. China has also made semiauto M14 rifles, and a large number of these have been imported into the U.S. Reportedly, Philippine rebels are using many of these Chinese-made weapons.

Although the M16A2 rifle and the M4 carbine are now standard issue, existing stocks of M14 rifles are portioned out regularly by our armed services when power, accuracy and extended range are found desirable. Semiauto M14s are also hard to beat as civilian defense arms, and many thousands of them have been bought as collector’s items. A lot of Vietnam combat veterans still swear by the old ‘14. As our last true full-power battle rifle, it’s an enduring classic that still finds useful employment in armed conflict, on rifle ranges, and in hunting fields.

