

DEFINITIVE DRAGUNOV

AMONGST THE AIRSOFT ACTION CREW WE HAVE A NUMBER OF DEDICATED OPFOR PLAYERS, AND IN RECOGNITION OF ITS WELL-EARNED STANDING IN AIRSOFT CIRCLES DAN AND STEWBACCA PUT THEIR HEADS TOGETHER TO TAKE A LOOK BACK AT ONE OF THE MOST RESPECTED 6MM "DRAGUNOV" MARKSMAN RIFLES TO HAVE BEEN MADE, THE MIGHTY, AND NOW RARE, REAL SWORD SVD!

Often the baseline metric for which Airsoft SVD's and their various derivatives are measured against, the Real Sword Dragunov SVD has deservedly reigned dominant throughout the years. The Real Sword is a true 1:1 replica, possessing a quality of construction rarely, if ever, matched by airsoft companies; weighing within 113g / 4oz. of the real SVD (without scope) and assembled from durable heat-treated steel and laminated plywood, it is even finished in accordance to real SVD's, with a parkerized base finish underlying a painted exterior. Simply every detail of this AEG was made to be as authentic as possible!

In the current market the Real Sword SVD is a hard beast to track down, and owners are most certainly NOT leeting them out of their sight if they are lucky enough to have one in their armoury! Okay, we know that it a super-high-quality piece of airsoft engineering, but what makes it just SO special? Stewbacca leads off with a look at an airsoft rifle that has now gained a mythical reputation from a player perspective...



Stewbacca: Having already bought their QBZ97 platform as a bit of something different during my bullpup and higher-end gun collecting phase (after I got rid of most of my cheapsoft gear) once I started focusing mostly on my own gaming instead of arming a whole minibus load of people in the previous years, I also decided to drop silly money on a Real Sword SVD AEG, having seen them advertised and then Landwarrior getting the first batch in the country. It came without the scopes or other accoutrements, and Scott had called me and pre-warned me at the time that they would likely be coming in on the warm side as they were straight in from Asia.

I ordered one and once it arrived I broke out my chrono and decided to test it; initially I was perplexed when it only clocked around '170', then I realised I'd left my chrono in metric mode... somewhat toasty indeed! After drilling a hole in the laminate flooring with that downward shot into a target net I spent the

first evening disassembling and reassembling it around fifteen times to get the power down, and even used the spring from my QBZ and swapped them out to balance the power levels of both guns. Once I'd done all that faffing about they were both shooting at 346 and 348 FPS consistently respectively.

From then on I used the SVD like any other AEG in terms of gameplay and the rules I had to abide by; at the time the whole grey zone of higher powered 'semi locked DMRs' was something I personally avoided and I got more than ample performance out of the RS SVD using just normal power limits, thanks to its leviathan 690mm internal barrel and oversized elongated cylinder. I'd regularly outrange other players at Skirmish Ollerton and could dominate the football pitch paintball-style arena with the SVD, posting even lighter weight rounds consistently through gaps my other guns would struggle with; I would often be heard exclaiming "I @!>% love this gun" in my own gameplay videos when using it.

I acquired a PSO-1 scope (possibly King Arms, it

was a long time ago!) which needed some work to fit properly; I had to dremel its front mounting shoe to drop the reticle down considerably and allow me to get it anywhere near the point of impact, and the illuminated reticle electrics also had to have some work done on them. Eventually I also acquired a proper replica of the bipod which finished the look nicely and made it more manageable when using on overwatch for protracted periods. Also eventually I acquired eight midcaps in total and jungle mag taped them into pairs; I used four TMC utility pouches on a PLB belt to carry these pairs as finding suitable pouches for them as singles or in general was one aspect I struggled with. The short 10 BB real-steel magazines are a bit square and boxy for most pouches, and having them taped in pairs at least meant I had double the capacity easily available when firing from prone or inconvenient positions.

Playing OPFOR at all of the Copehill MilSim games

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I went to, the SVD was a regular showpiece for me to take along, allowing me some useful range from high places and the PSO-1 replica aided with target identification and to some extent even ranging thanks to its legit stadia curve thing that you bracket a man sized target in to get an idea of distance. Internally it was built like a tank and I had very few issues with it past that first mess around getting it shooting at a reasonable power; I thought at the time that they could have put a quick change spring system in under the top cover and made it a lot easier, but the whole thing had to be dismantled completely to work on the gearbox it seemed.

I think I had one instance where the original spring eventually bound up and I had to strip the whole thing down and redo the internals, as well as clear out a bunch of grit that had apparently made



its way in after I used the SVD as an impromptu entrenching tool; I fell over on it hard when I slipped in mud at one game, the gun was fine, the arm it landed on under me was bruised along its whole length... clumsy? Who, me?

Overwhelmingly it was a positive experience owning it and gave me a lot of good games and just looked and felt the business, but in the end I sold it on to a friend for a third of what I'd paid for the whole lot before leaving the UK, and he's made further modifications to it with MOSFETs etc since then... but oh my, I still miss the SVD even now!

THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

Okay, so, loved by the player, but what went on inside the RS SVD; what made it work as well as it did? Dan takes the story forward...

Dan: For its time in history, the unique constraints of the receiver resulted in Real Sword having to design a completely new gearbox to sit inside of their SVD. Known formally as the "T3" gearbox, this was a high quality extended gearbox casing housing a large cylinder design, a beefy 19-tooth piston and a set of torque 28.7:1 ratio gears in 7mm bearings, and was powered by a short type 28 TPA ferrous motor. Just as in the CYMA SVD, which clones many aspects of the Real Sword, the 4th gear is just a transfer gear, which is necessitated due to the long design of the gearbox shell.

There is an interesting little device that rides on the underside of the gearbox that can be used in instances where one might experience a semi-auto lockup. This is a situation that can occur if one is rapidly operating the trigger and inadvertently short-

strokes it, resulting in the trigger trolley and the cutoff lever binding and locking up the gearbox. By removing the magazine and inserting a long object, such as an Allen key, your car key, or the like you can depress this plate, which pushes against the cutoff lever and raises it away from the trolley. Pulling the trigger will then cycle the gearbox in full auto and clear out the lockup. If using a more powerful motor, 11.1v LiPo's and making complete trigger pulls, one can greatly mitigate the need for this device. Still, it's a nice feature to have for those rare instances where it might be induced.

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Quite unique to the Real Sword, however, was the massive air cylinder design. This was both elongated for the aforementioned 19-tooth piston, and had a larger internal diameter than conventional bore-up cylinders, a bore up “plus”, if you will. Owing to such, the cylinder head and piston head were completely proprietary to it. Technically, by extension the gearbox shell was also proprietary to it as the cylinder area was enlarged to accommodate the larger compression components. The air nozzle was a quality design and featured an O-ring that helped maintain the excellent compression.

The inner barrel was among the longest made for a stock AEG at 690mm in length, with a 6.05mm diameter bore. This was mounted to a rotary hop up chamber that had a top-down-center style hop up arm that provided vertical hop up pressure against the bucking. This assembly sat inside a very rigid steel outer barrel that was a precision fit to the receiver. A set of stabilizing screws sat to either side of the chamber and provided additional rigidity, but could also be used to help center the hop up chamber for better air nozzle alignment.

With regard to upgrades, these will accept standard AEG-cut inner barrels, hop up buckings, V3 trigger switches, bushings, motors, and some other small parts. If you're lucky enough to own a Real Sword, for longevity I would recommend installing an inline MOSFET to help preserve the trigger contacts. A Neodymium motor will also greatly improve the semi-auto responsiveness, and this gun practically begs for a high quality inner barrel and aftermarket bucking or an R-Hop. Once so outfitted and tuned up, it becomes an absolutely formidable beast on the field.

As mentioned, the Real Sword was originally fitted with many parts that are literally indistinguishable from the real steel analogue. This has lead to some popular misconception about them being made entirely from converted SVD's, but in some areas,

they do in fact use converted components. A notable example is the magazines, which was verified from some old correspondence with Real Sword as having been made from real converted SVD magazines. These are amazingly robust and have true steel locking lugs and incredible lockup, something I wish more Airsoft manufacturers would diligently pursue, especially with AK platforms.

Having now been my near-constant companion on the field for over 14 years, the Real Sword SVD has proved itself nothing less than exemplary and extremely durable. Together, we have created many fond memories and legendary encounters that are still spoken of within the ranks of our local community. My example has been running a Guarder SP150 spring producing 2.7J / 545 FPS since day one, and is still running the stock gears, piston and bearings; all of which have dutifully chugged along without fail. I rarely see AEG's that hold up as well for as long as this platform has, to be honest.

A real SVD is admittedly one of my “grail guns” that I'd love to own someday, but can't really justify laying down the cost of a small down payment for a house on. As such, the airsoft reproductions are eminently more approachable to the average layman, and just as fun to collect and shoot.

Unfortunately, airsofters wishing to get their hands on one of these will have an uphill battle ahead of them as these have been long discontinued and Real Sword no longer appears to be in operation for that matter. When new, these used to be available for about USD\$450 and used examples now can fetch in excess of USD\$1000!. As such, whatever number of these that remain in circulation are kept close at hand, and used examples rarely appear on the secondhand market. Still, if you're willing to put in some effort locating one, you could find no better SVD replica available. **AA**



