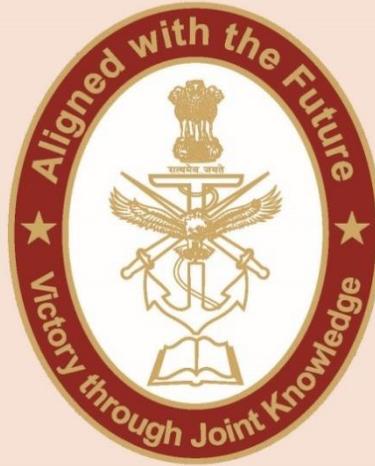


CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



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NEW CHINESE ASSAULT RIFLE

1. **China's Army Is Getting a New Assault Rifle: Likely to be Named QBZ-17/18/19.**



The first hint the PLA was considering replacing its standard QBZ-95s bull pup-style rifle emerged in 2016-2017 through two images shared in a [Chinese blog](#). That initial post was later elaborated upon in U.S. media, most notably by [Popular Science](#) and [The Fire Arms Blog](#).

2. More recently, just days prior to the anniversary parade, a few images leaked out. These photos revealed a design very similar to the earlier 2016-2017 photos. Finally on October 1, 2019 thousands of the weapons were televised before the global public, signaling the PLA's intention to adopt it as a new service rifle.

3. The new weapon's designation remains unconfirmed. Chinese state television merely commented "*This new assault rifle has a comfortable layout and the concept of modular design, which possesses the advantages of high power, high reliability and versatility.*"

4. However, according to 'The Firearms Blog' by Anthony J., it's designation may be the QBZ-191. Other commentators speculate it may be called the QBZ-17 or QBZ-19 — after the year of its entry in service.

5. **The Earlier Bull pup Style Rifle and Its Lacunae.** The new weapon will replace the QBZ-95 bull pup-style rifle that was introduced in 1997. Three million QBZ-95s were built, including carbine and light support variants with a 75-round drum magazine. China also exported a 5.56-millimeter variant called the QBZ-97 which is used to varying degrees by armed forces in Laos, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines, Rwanda and Sudan.

6. Around 2012, China also began issuing the improved QBZ-95-1 model using a heavier round and barrel, and boasting improved ergonomics and recoil absorption. But the QBZ-95-1 not integrated army-wide, suggesting the PLA was already looking ahead to a larger change.

7. A bull pup rifle incorporates the action and magazine behind the trigger, giving bull pup rifles a distinctly futuristic and stubby appearance. By integrating these components into the stock, bull pup weapon can generate the same velocity as a longer conventional rifle in a more compact and potentially lighter package. Major bull pup designs include the Austrian Steyr Aug, the French FAMAS, the Israeli Tavor X95 and the British SA80 rifle. But the bull pup layout has downsides. In addition to some users finding them ergonomically awkward, a bull pup user must place their face closer to the action for aimed fire, increasing the risk of mishaps with spent ammunition casings, misfired rounds and collision with protruding mechanisms. Recently, an increasing number of major bull pup operators are abandoning them in favor of the more conventional assault rifle layout—notably France which ditched the distinctive FAMAS for the HK-416 assault rifle.

8. While the PLA does not usually comment on the shortcomings of its weapons, Chinese military bloggers were unsparing in their criticisms. Even Chinese-language Wikipedia has a fourteen-point list of QBZ-95 flaws, including cheap night-sights rapidly losing their glow, difficulty in changing firing modes in combat, and a general lack of quality-control.

9. **China's New Modular Rifle.** The assault rifle displayed in 2019 marks a major transition back to a more conventional gas-operated short-stroke piston assault rifle. A folding stock with four or five fixed settings is also visible. A thumb-operated fire mode selector allows switching between semi- and fully-automatic fire.

10. Curiously, Anthony's article claims the gun does away with the three-round burst option, which at one point was favored by the U.S. Army at the expense of automatic fire in its later M16 rifle variants.

11. Commentators have noticed the new Chinese gun's similarities to the HK-416 (entering U.S. Marine Corps service as the M-27) and the FN SCAR, known for its adaptive components. Broadly, the new weapon seemingly reflects the increasingly popular concept that infantry rifles should feature modular components allowing customization for different roles and combat scenarios.

12. Three variants of the new rifle have been spotted so far: a short-barrel carbine, a standard rifle variant, and a Designated Marksmen Rifle variant (a sort of low-end sniper rifle integrated at the squad level) with a lengthened barrel, bipod, and enlarged scope.

13. It remains unclear whether a heavier light-machine gun or squad automatic weapon variant will also be produced as was done for the QBZ-95, as China is reportedly separately developing a new 5.8-millimeter light machine gun.

14. Anthony's piece also reports that the weapon retains the 5.8x42 millimeter bullet of its predecessor, but that "its confirmed the PLA has adopted new 5.8x42mm rounds that have better performance on medium to long-range."

15. If true, this would square with the increasing emphasis on longer-range marksmanship in professional armies, as well as growing concerns that greater penetration will be needed to overmatch modern body armor used by adversaries in a high-intensity conflict. A higher energy round could retain greater accuracy and penetration over longer distances.

16. Its **Key features** can be summarized as under:-

- (a) Conventional rifle arrangement, forgoing bullpup arrangement of QBZ-95/-1.
- (b) Likely gas piston short stroke system.
- (c) Full length top rail, with flip-up front and rear back up iron sights that appear to be fixed. At least two types of scopes identified during the parade, one of which may be a fixed magnification scope with fiber optic and tritium illumination, and one of which is thought to be a night scope.
- (d) Grip pod type system with integrated networking and communications controls identified as well.
- (e) Single piece hand guard with ribbing and attachment points for optional rail pieces at 3, 9 and 6 o'clock.
- (f) Ambidextrous fire selector switch.
- (g) Bolt release button on left side.

- (h) Non-folding, telescoping stock.
- (j) Short barrel/carbine variant and longer barrel/assault rifle variant.
- (k) Designated marksman rifle variant under development.

<https://thediplomat.com/2019/10/reviewing-chinas-national-day-parade/>

<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/chinas-army-getting-new-assault-rifle-and-it-could-be-really-big-deal-87711>