

Headspace Checks On AK-47/74 Type Rifles

What to expect from your headspace gauges

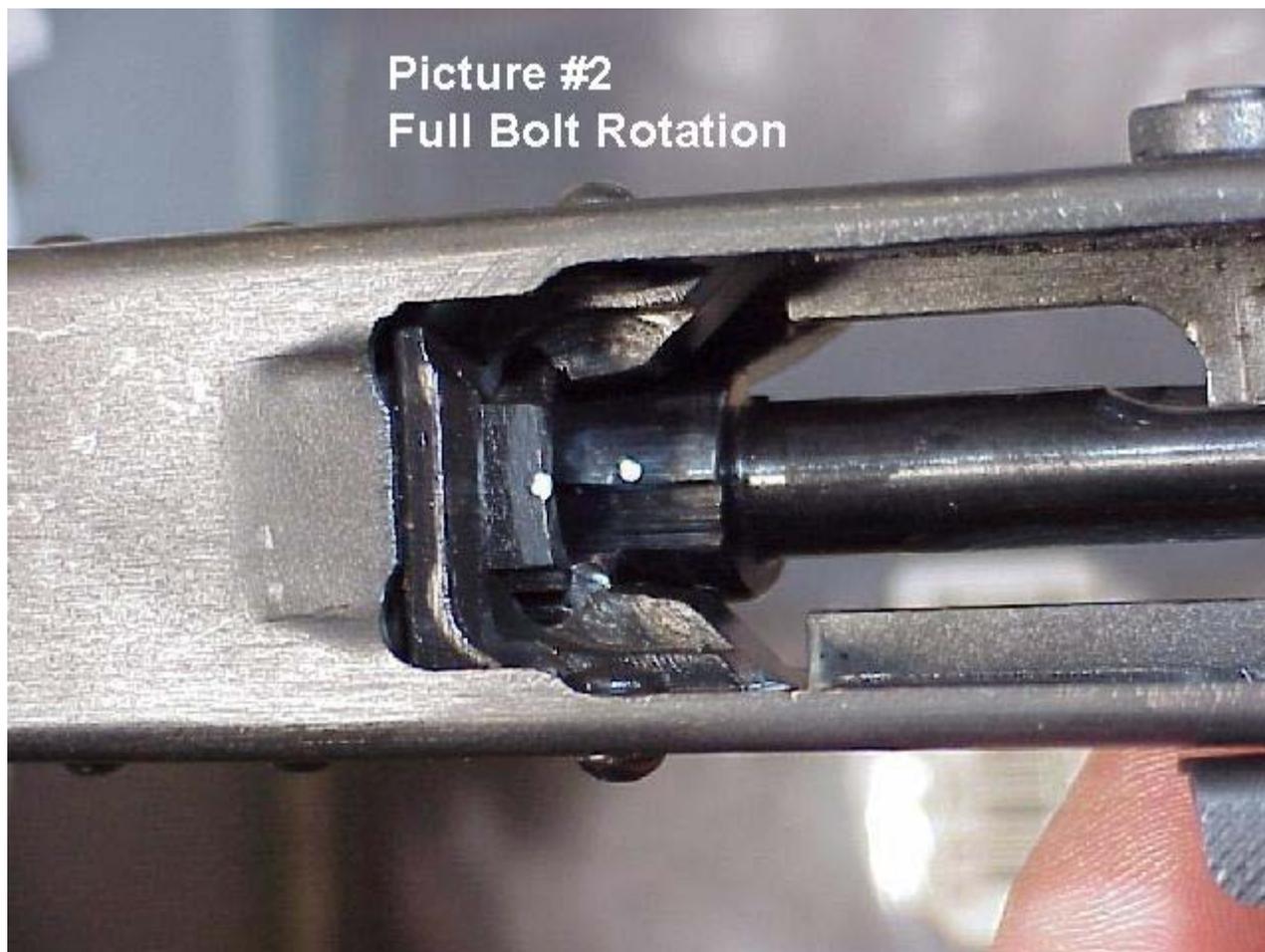
Hopefully, I will be able to tell you what to expect from your headspace gauges. First and foremost I am not an “EXPERT”. There will always be people that know more or less than I. You will have to remember that AK’s are “NOT” manufactured to the close tolerances that U.S. made AR-15’s, M-14’s or bolt action rifles are. Knowing this will allow acceptance of tolerances that would not be acceptable from U.S. manufactured firearms. I’m not going to get into manufacturing processes, which is better, SAAMI or CIP or any really heavy handed technical stuff. Also, I not a professional photographer so please bare with the pictures.

First, let’s define **Bolt Lockup** and **Full Bolt Rotation**.

Bolt Lockup (Picture #1) is when the bolt moves the maximum distance when being closed by the bolt carrier. This is what happens when you pull the bolt carrier back to charge the rifle and let it go to feed a round into the chamber. In another words, this is the normal operational sequence of the bolt and bolt carrier working together.



Full Bolt Rotation (Picture #2) is when you insert the bolt into the front trunnion and rotate it till it stops.

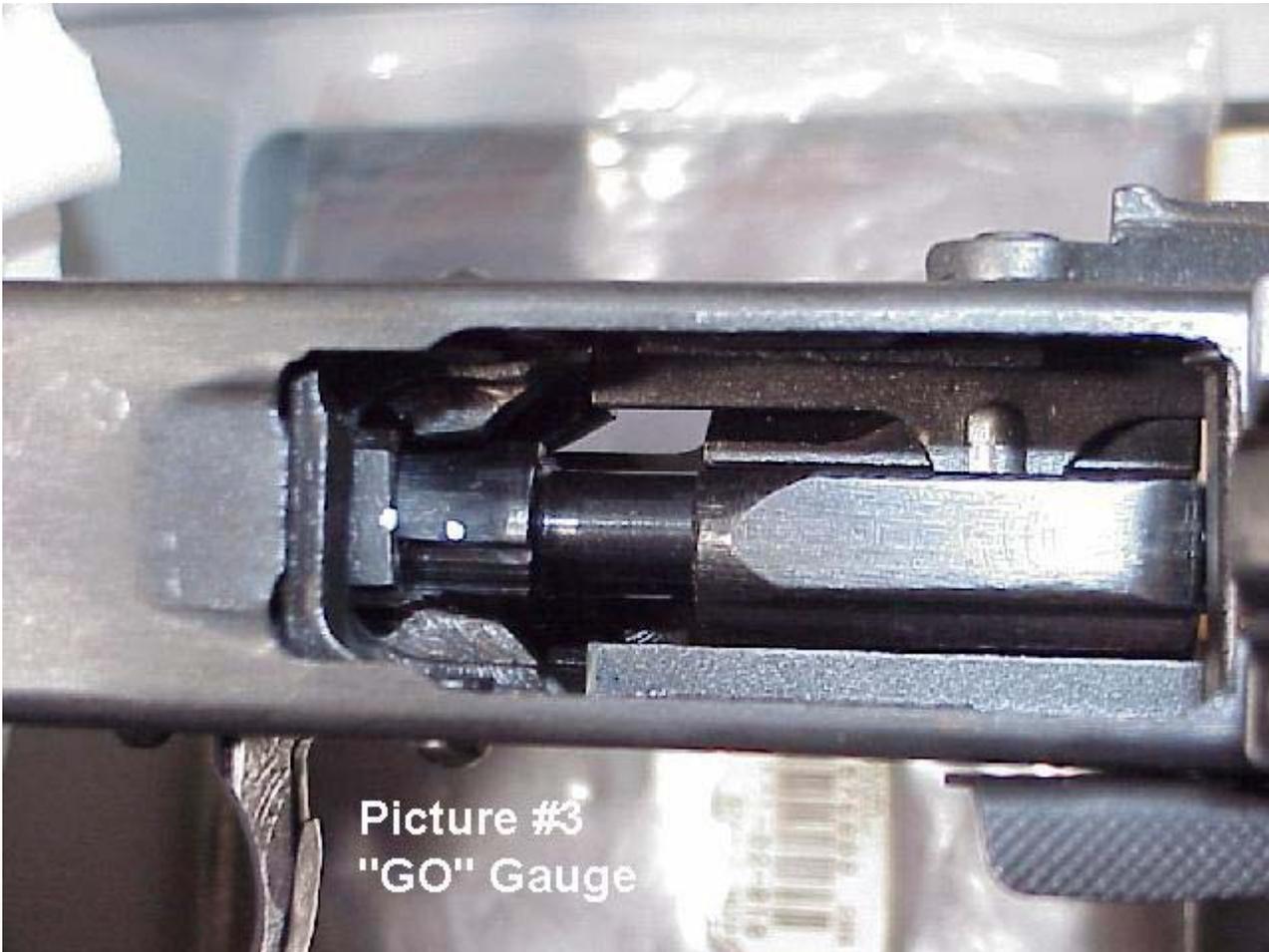


These are two and independent dimensions/operations. Also they will give you different indications of bolt movement. Since were interested in headspace checking only, **Full Bolt Rotation** will **NOT** be addressed.

Setting up to check the headspace on the AK47/74 type rifles

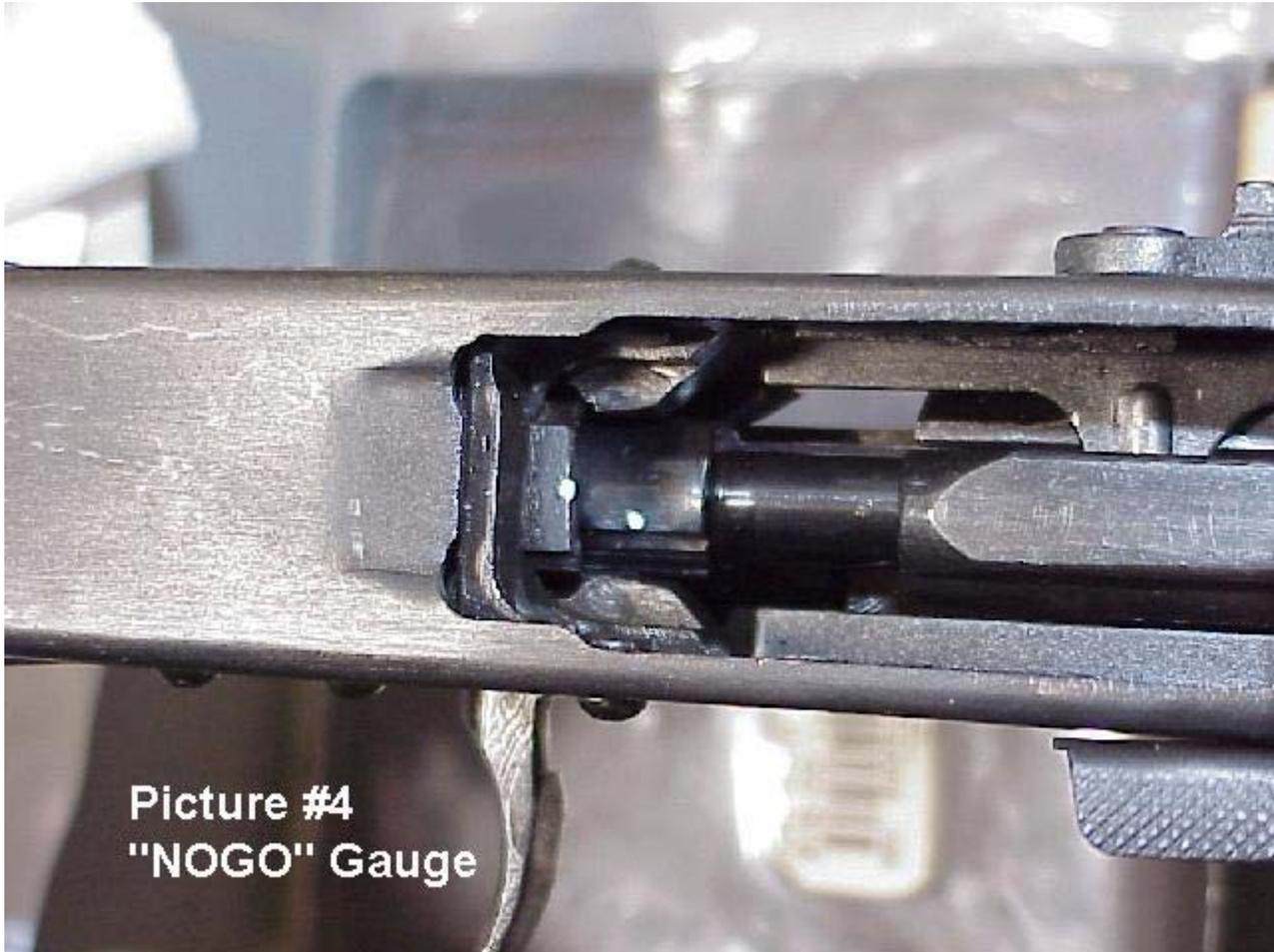
First and foremost the firearm must be safe. Remove the magazine, pull the bolt carrier to the rear and inspect the chamber to ensure that the chamber is empty. **Working tip, these operations are much easier with the recoil spring removed.** With the bolt carrier in it's most forward position, check to see where the bolt has stopped in relationship to the front trunnion. I make a reference mark on the front trunnion and the bolt (Picture #1). You are now setup to check headspace.

“GO” Gauge... Pull the bolt carrier to the rear just enough so that the bolt has does not engage the ejector. Slide the “GO” gauge into the bolt head recess (it can be held by the extractor), then slowly (**I MEAN SLOWLY**) allow the carrier to move forward to chamber the “GO” gauge. When the carrier has stopped moving, check the reference points mentioned in “Setting Up”. They should match, indicating that the rifle has passed the “GO” check (Picture #3). But remember that were talking about an AK-47/74 type rifle so there might be just a very, very small difference in the two reference marks. Pull the bolt carrier back and remove the “GO” gauge from the bolt.



Picture #3
"GO" Gauge

“NOGO” Gauge... Pull the bolt carrier back as stated above and insert the “NOGO” gauge. Again slowly move the bolt carrier forward until it stops. The bolt reference marks should not align (Picture #4). At this time the “NOGO” check has been completed. If the reference marks align it means that the chamber is getting close to the maximum allowable size set by the manufacturer. If this is the case you have two (2) options.



Option 1: Obtain a “Field” headspace gauge to accomplish the same check as stated above to ensure that the reference marks will not align. This gauge indicates the maximum “SAFE” chamber dimension.

Option 2: Replace the barrel assembly.

I personally feel that if the bolt aligns with the reference marks when using the “NOGO” gauge the firearm is not safe for use. A new barrel is cheaper than a new face.