

# The saga surrounding assault rifles



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Gun control has been a touchy issue in the United States since a long while back. There has been much debate over whether guns should be banned in the country, the ownership of which is actually grounded in the constitution. In this regard, lobbyists of both sides have been pushing hard for a long time. A particular issue that now seems to have arisen from the middle relates to banning assault rifles. By the second amendment, every citizen of the United States has the right to bear fire arms for his or her own protection as well as the possible need for a militia in times of war (Kopel 1999).

This is a remnant of the country's history which had to endure a revolutionary war against Great Britain, a massive civil war as well as the ever present issue of slavery which always seemed to require households to carry guns. Since then gun control has become a touchy issue. In this regard, a ban was brought into place on assault weapons in 1994 which saw the end of a ten year reign in 2004 when the Republican president George Bush refused to extend it (Carter 2009). Now most people argue that it is military style assault rifles that should be banned and not handguns or those used for hunting and sport.

Assault rifles such as AK-47s can be used to shoot multiple rounds of bullets at a rapid pace. The argument that is being made is that Americans have the right to bear firearms but the use of assault rifles is wholly unnecessary. With the use of standard guns, people can fulfill their desire to possess firearms for sport or for their personal protection but the availability of assault rifles creates a whole new pantheon of problems (Carter 2009). Rapid firing weapons allow criminals to shoot down civilians as has been illustrated in the case of Pittsburgh.

They are used in school shootings, by gangs and drug mafias and can pierce through the protective clothing worn by police officers (Kazmer 2009). However, the solution has never been so simple as to ban the weapons outright. The National Rifle Association has been a strong opponent of this and is buoyed by strong support from some sectors of the public. The delicacy of the situation can be adequately represented by President Obama's back step from his vociferous promises to continue with the gun ban during his campaign.

Now in a recent trip to Mexico, he has pushed for the need to carry on the existing legislation and controls and make them work better (Powell 2009). This has been pleasing to many gun lobbyists as well but it speaks of the times we live in. The last president to bring about the ban lost office soon enough at the hands of dissident voters which is a testament to the thorny nature of the issue. Indeed gun lobbyists make their own points in favor of assault rifles as well. It is argued that there are always exceptions to the rule that are not being considered.

There is a need for assault rifles by the public in some cases. Boat owners in the Gulf coast region have to frequently face harassment from drug smugglers who can easily dispose of innocent civilians with their rapid firing semi automatic guns. In this case, self defense is not possible without assault rifles. A store owner being faced with a hold up by a gang may need the rapid firing power of an assault rifle to fight off the multiple enemies who threaten him without which he may end up losing his money as well as his life.

Rural farmers in many cases have to contend with bear attacks. These creatures are not easy to fend off with traditional rifles and handguns and

assault rifles may be necessary for a farmer to defend his family in the rural wilderness (Kopel 1999). It is further argued that the everyday criminal makes use of hand guns mostly and does not indulge in the purchase of assault rifles which therefore do not threaten public security. Both sides continue to make strong points in favor of their cause.

However what has to be distinguished now is that whether it is more important to protect a right that has been ingrained into the constitution of the country and to consider the needs of particular citizens or to lessen the number of deadly guns available in the streets that result in deaths of innocent people. In this regard, one has to consider the facts. While it is known that assault rifles may be necessary in some cases, they also prove to be a severe detriment to American society as well.

In 2006, it was estimated that more than thirty thousand people died in the year due to firearms and therefore accounted for nearly twenty percent of all injury related deaths. Similarly in 2005, a teenager was killed with a firearm nearly every nine hours (Carter 2009). These deaths were caused primarily by assault rifles. It is necessary that the fundamental rights of the American people be defended. However, the issue is not just about rights but about something much deeper. It relates to the security and the good living of the American public.

If keeping these assault rifles open to the public does not give us a better society, what good is there to protect this right? Certainly freedoms should not be curtailed but should be defended to every last inch but if it compromises the very security of our children and our future, then it is a freedom worth relinquishing. The ideal solution would be banning assault

rifles all together. However, if this can not be met, it requires at least that better controls and back ground checks be brought into place with regards to gun purchases.

This would not only help to control the damage to some extent and protect the rights under the second amendment but may also help to lower the trafficking of these assault weapons to the drug cartels in Mexico which are armed through the United States. A better society is indeed worth fighting for and if compromises have to be made for a better future, it is perhaps prudent to make them now rather than let the bearers of our future suffer.

Biblio