



SPORTING ARMS AND AMMUNITION MANUFACTURERS' INSTITUTE, INC.

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Statement by Richard Patterson, Executive Director  
Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute, Inc.

Thank you Mr. Chair. My name is Richard Patterson, and I'm the Executive Director of the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute (SAAMI). For more than 89 years, the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute has been literally setting the standard for firearms safety and reliability, and offering our unique knowledge and expertise to legislative and regulatory bodies. For more than 40 years we have been working with the UN on small arms and ammunition issues, and for 15 years we have been speaking on these issues within the UN disarmament arena.

When we make a suggestion, it's because we want the resulting system to work. Systems work when they are reliable, realistic, simple, and all parties agree they will result in a measurable reduction of criminal violence.

One suggestion that we continue to offer is to only mark one part—the frame or receiver. The frame or receiver is the part to which every other major part attaches. It is almost always the most difficult part to manufacture—which makes illicit reproduction more difficult.

The concept of modularity seems to be the latest buzzword. The fact is modularity is nothing new. It's really just a fancy term for interchangeability. The concept of interchangeability is the cornerstone technology, created by the firearms industry, that led to the start of the industrial revolution.

The implications being promoted from the use of this latest terminology are a need to mark all parts and components, but the fundamental concepts have not changed. Marking of only one part—the frame or receiver—is still the most effective system. This is a catalog from just one company that sells component parts. Of the nearly 100,000 parts in their inventory, less than 100 are frames or receivers. These frames and receivers are marked, and only sold to licensed dealers. Attempting to mark and maintain records for all major parts violates the rule of simplicity, and increases the potential for errors that would allow criminals to escape prosecution.

The effectiveness of marking only the frame/receiver applies to polymer parts, as well. Metal inserts are most often used. Some designs utilize a "window" through the polymer that allows information marked on a metal housing to be read. Electronic chips are sometimes discussed, but they are easily defeated (and don't meet the requirements of the ITI).

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Similarly, micromarking does not meet the requirements of ITI. Unlike large and complex products, firearms are simple, and any space where a micromark can be imprinted would be accessible and the mark defeated. It's small size actually makes a micromark easier to defeat.

Microstamping—marks on a firing pin that, in theory, would be transferred to the cartridge case when the firearm is discharged—have been the subject of several studies. The studies have been performed by groups as diverse as the Association of Firearm and Tool Mark Examiners, University of California at Berkley, and even the patent-holder of the idea. Every study concludes that microstamping is not a viable crimefighting tool.

Various electronic systems have been proposed for uses related to SALW. It has been suggested that RFID, biometrics, barcoding, GPS, and other systems may have different potential uses for stockpile management or integration into small arms.

Some of these systems may assist with government stockpile management, but none of them should be mistaken for a panacea. As a recordkeeping technique it is primarily a time-saving mechanism. As a theft-deterrent it may simply mean the criminal steals an RFID card instead of a key. Additionally, this is another example of technologies that may have use in managing government stockpiles, but is not applicable to sporting arms. Military weapons and sporting firearms are different and crime-fighting efforts should reflect those differences.

Integration of these electronic systems into the firearm itself, the so-called smart gun, has been widely mislabeled as a safety device. In fact, it is a security device. It's an electronic gun lock. While there is insufficient time to discuss the issues in this intervention, SAAMI is very concerned that overselling the idea of a smart-gun as a safety device in fact undermines real firearm safety. It is a lock—nothing less and nothing more. It is easily defeated with common tools. The implication that a smart gun is somehow inherently safer is false. Firearms (and any associated wristbands, etc.) still need to be handled and stored properly. The choice of what kind of lock works best for their situation should be left to the customer.

We are concerned with adding GPS to small arms. Hackers, terrorists, and criminals can use GPS data to identify, track, and target personnel as well as weapon storage and movement.

All of this increased attention on the computerization of SALW, especially the various schemes that allow the fire control systems of small arms to be controlled from a distance, need to be thoroughly examined. It is a very bad idea to give hackers, terrorists, and criminals remote access to the fire control systems of weapons.

While we should all consider the possible benefits of integration of SALW with electronics and computer systems, we must do so with the overarching understanding that such implementation must be reliable, realistic, simple, and result in measurable decreases in crime. Our eyes must remain wide-open to the very real potential that an increased dependence on electronic technology can prove counterproductive to our common goal of reducing violence.

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