



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on April 9, 2014

Holder Promotes Smart Guns

Attorney General Eric Holder's [comments last week](#) before a House appropriations committee probably killed any chance that Ron Conway, a Silicon Valley venture capitalist, might get any return on his money. Conway launched a \$1 million X Prize-like contest last month for developers of smart gun technology, hoping to find an investment opportunity as a result.



Said Holder:

One of the things we learned when we were trying to pass those common sense [gun control] reforms last year, Vice President Biden and I had a meeting with a group of technology people and talked about how guns can be made more safe by making them [use] ... fingerprint identification, [or] the gun talks to a bracelet or something that you might wear.... Guns can be used only by the person who is lawfully in possession of the weapon.

With Holder touting the benefits of smart gun technology, the demand that might otherwise exist for such a weapon is very likely to be chilled. This is the attorney general who has so offended the pro-gun community that any endorsement from him of what otherwise might be a good idea is likely to result in it being stillborn.

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He's the AG who declared that the Islamist terrorist who attacked Fort Hood soldiers five years ago was guilty only of "workplace violence." He's the AG who secretly obtained two months' worth of telephone records of reporters and editors of the Associated Press. It was his Department of Justice that charged Fox News correspondent James Rosen as an "aider and abettor" in a spy ring for having received information from a North Korean analyst for one of his articles.

Holder is the one who declared that the Second Amendment does not protect an individual right but instead applies only to government militias. He's the one who dropped all charges against the Black Panthers for intimidating voters in 2008. He's the AG opposed to Voter ID laws, and he's the one behind the scandalous Fast and Furious government gun-running scandal that led to the murder of Border Agent Brian Terry.

Conway, despite the dubious Holder endorsement, sees significant potential in firearms such as the Armatix iP1 (shown), which will only fire if it recognizes its owner through a wristwatch. Without the wristwatch, it won't fire. Proponents of the technology are comparing it to seat belts, smoke detectors, and airbags: criticized at first but later embraced.

In announcing his contest, Conway said:

We need the iPhone of guns. The entrepreneur who does this right could be the Mark Zuckerberg of guns.

Then venture capitalists like me will dive in, give them capital and we will build a multibillion-dollar gun company that makes safe, smart guns.



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You let the free enterprise system take over. Just like everyone opted into the iPhone and abandoned the flip phone and [the] Blackberry, consumers will vote with their feet.

We want gun owners to feel like they are dinosaurs if they aren't using smart guns.

However, having Holder as the de facto supporter and front man for such tools isn't the only obstacle to turning Conway's dream into a reality. There's the National Rifle Association (NRA), which noted that such firearms "clearly have the potential to mesh with the anti-gunners' agenda, opening the door to a ban on all guns that do not possess the government-required technology."

Back in 2000, President Clinton made a deal with Smith & Wesson that backfired, largely owing to NRA opposition. Clinton agreed to end numerous federal and state lawsuits against the company in exchange for company efforts to, among other things, implement smart gun technology. The NRA called Smith's move a "sellout," and the company's sales plummeted.

And even the most rabid anti-gun groups aren't embracing the concept. Josh Sugermann, executive director of the Violence Policy Center, said that if the technology works as anticipated by the enthusiastic Conway, it will only add more gun owners to those currently owning more than 300 million firearms in the country.

There's the cost, too, which for many will be a barrier to ownership. At present, the Amatrix iP1 comes in .22-caliber and costs \$1,399, plus another \$399 for the watch.

But Holder's comments on Friday probably ended any serious attempt to find a market for the smart gun, at least for the moment. He simply couldn't be a worse spokesman to promote what the free market might otherwise embrace.

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