



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on May 3, 2023

Is the AR-15 Really a “Weapon of War”?

What is a “weapon of war”? Given all the talk about how such things mustn’t be on our streets — the claim that a firearm thus designated mustn’t be available to citizens — it’s an important question.

If by the phrase is meant a weapon designed for or used in warfare present or past, then the muskets and flintlocks the Founding Fathers carried qualify. So do spears, knives, the bow and arrow, and clubs and rocks.

Speaking of which, while agitating against AR-15s’ legality in 2013, then-vice president Joe Biden said that if “you want to keep someone away from your house, just fire the shotgun through the door.” Aside from sounding close to what 84-year-old Kansas City man Andrew Lester did when shooting innocent teen Ralph Yarl on April 13, there’s an irony here:

The AR-15 has never been issued to our military.

The shotgun has.

So there’s good ‘ol Joe, recommending a “weapon of war.”

As Peter Suci at 1945 [explains](#):

U.S. soldiers were actually issued ... a number of pump-action shotguns, notably the Winchester Model 1897 - and those firearms quickly earned the infamous moniker “trench shotgun.” The six-shot, single-barreled trench shotguns were equipped with a bayonet and loaded with 12-gauge buckshot.

“The trench shotgun is America’s greatest contribution to the war,” Peter P. Carney, the then-editor for the National Sports Syndicate, wrote in 1918. “Through the expert handling of the trench shotgun the Germans learned that the Yanks were coming. At the first taste of the pellets the Germans began to whine and then to write notes calling us ‘barbarians,’ Germany, too!”

The shotguns were first employed in combat at the Battle of Belleau Wood in June 1918, where they were used to literally mow down the enemy. The weapon proved so devastating that on September 15, 1918, the German government officially protested its use.

Shotguns were also used in WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and are employed by our military [to this day](#). This is for good reason, too.



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You see, Biden is right — in a way. Being far more devastating against soft targets at close range (the typical self-defense situation) than an AR or handgun is, a shotgun is ideal for home defense.

In keeping with this, it's also ideal for another soft-target, close-range scenario: a mass-shooting massacre.

(So arguably, it's good that most mass shooters, being an irrational bunch, don't understand this and instead may use the "cool-looking" AR-15.)

What's the difference between the two weapons? The standard round of an AR (which stands for "Armalite Rifle," after the company first producing it, not "assault rifle") is low caliber, approximately the same size as the .22 young boys would fire from their Marlin target rifles. Called a .223 or 5.56, the AR releases *one* of these bullets with each trigger squeeze; it is *not* a machine gun. And while the bullet's velocity is great, its small mass means it has less "stopping power" than most any other rifle cartridge, according to [this analysis](#).

Semi-automatic shotguns — readily available to the public — also fire one round with each trigger squeeze. The difference: They fire "shot," pellets that begin to disperse upon leaving the barrel, so that it's hard to miss and the target is struck with essentially *multiple* rounds.

Loaded with magnum 00 buckshot, such as weapon is a veritable hand cannon. If hit in the torso with an AR's .223, with no vital organ struck, survival is likely with medical care. A torso blast with magnum 00 buck will virtually guarantee death.

Given this, a question arises: *If* it makes sense to outlaw AR-15s, wouldn't it follow that weapons more devastating/greater in stopping capacity, such as shotguns and more powerful hunting rifles, should also be criminalized?

The point is that outlawing ARs is just one step on the way to anti-Second Amendment activists' real goal: the criminalization of all firearms.

Some more AR-15 facts:

- The rifle the military actually does use, which is seen in war movies and based on the AR platform, is the M-16, now largely replaced by the M-4. It's very different in function because where the AR-15 is semi-automatic, like most firearms sold in America, the M-16/M-4 has a "select fire" feature allowing it to also be fired as a machine gun or in bursts.
- The AR's standard round is so lacking in power that some states prohibit it for deer-hunting purposes, as it won't reliably bring the animal down, just leave it wounded.
- This doesn't mean it's never used for hunting. Its .223 is known as a "varmint round" — meaning, suitable for bagging small animals (e.g., raccoons) — and is used for that purpose.

But those agitating against the AR are only interested in bagging political victories. Regarding this, those old enough to have experienced the '80s and '90s may remember when gun-control proposals were just a tad more rational. Back then, the focus was on outlawing handguns. While I didn't support this (and still don't), at least there was some logic: Being concealable, handguns are criminals' choice firearm and are used in [62 percent](#) of gun-related homicides. In contrast, the FBI informs that "personal weapons" — defined as hands, fists, and feet — are used to commit more murders than rifles of *any kind*.

In other words, you could seize every AR-15 in existence, and it would make no appreciable difference in the murder or crime rate.



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But, hey, at least we'd have gotten some "weapons of war" off the street and would then just have to work on outlawing the rest — including hands, fists, and feet.



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