



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on February 16, 2015

ATF Bans Popular Rifle Ammunition It Says Is “Armor-Piercing”

On Friday night President Obama was [out on the hustings](#), raising money for Democrats and confirming that his mandate to change America remains in place. He told those attending a DNC fundraiser at the home of Sandy and Jeanne Robertson in San Francisco — each of whom contributed at least \$10,000 to hear the man — that he plans to be very busy during the final two years of his second term:



Two years is a long time. And two years is also the time in which we’re going to be setting the stage for the next presidential election and the next 10 years of American policy.

And so I intend to run through the tape and work really hard, and squeeze every last little bit of change and improvement in the lives of ordinary Americans and middle-class families that I can.

As if in anticipation of Obama’s remarks, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (still referred to simply as the ATF) issued its latest broadside against the Second Amendment the day before, declaring that by definition “green tip” M855 “ball ammunition” chambered in 5.56 mm is now “armor piercing” and can no longer be manufactured, imported, or sold in the United States.

In its [“framework”](#) that exposes the twisted logic behind its unilateral decision in a mind-bending 17-page analysis, the ATF defines armor-piercing based how the cartridge is constructed, rather than how it may, or may not, penetrate armor. But that doesn’t faze the authors:

To protect the lives and safety of law enforcement officers from the threat posed by ammunition capable of penetrating a protective vest, fired from a handgun, the Gun Control Act of 1968 ... *prohibits the import, manufacture and distribution of “armor piercing ammunition” as defined by [that] statute.* [Emphasis added.]

The ATF found its opening wedge in the growing popularity of AR-15 pistols chambered for the 5.56 mm cartridge and that served as its sole reason for banning the popular round. And just what is armor-piercing? Says the ATF: “those [cartridges] made out of specific listed materials that may be used in a handgun.” Specifically, “armor-piercing ammunition” means

A projectile or projectile core which may be used in a handgun and which is constructed entirely ... from one or a combination of tungsten alloys, steel, iron, brass, bronze, beryllium copper, or depleted uranium; OR

A full jacketed projectile larger than .22 caliber designed and intended for use in a handgun and whose jacket has a weight of more than 25 percent of the total weight of the projectile.

Until Thursday the ATF specifically exempted the now-disfavored rounds from such restrictions because they were used mostly for “sporting purposes” — however that might be defined. But since these rounds might now be used in a handgun that might be used in an attack on law enforcement officials sometime in the future, they must now be banned:



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ATF must withdraw the exemptions for 5.56 mm “green tip” ammunition, including both the SS109 and M855 cartridges....

Manufacturers will be unable to produce such armor piercing ammunition, importers will be unable to import such ammunition, and manufacturers and importers will be prohibited from selling or distributing the ammunition.

There are so many flaws and errors in logic in the “framework” one scarcely knows where to begin. First, the green “steel penetrator tip” was designed years ago to lend stability to the round over long ranges and consequently achieve better accuracy. Second, similar rounds without the offending materials can defeat body armor, not because of the material but because of the velocity of the round, approaching and often exceeding 3,000 feet per second. A golf ball traveling at that velocity would likely “defeat” any body armor currently available!

Third, armor-piercing ammunition has never been a significant factor in crime, with assault weapons (regardless of the ammunition used) accounting for less than two percent of all guns used in crimes committed in the United States.

So the ATF’s proclamation is without merit on its face. Instead it is part of its agenda in the war against the Second Amendment. Bob Owens, writing at Bearing Arms, saw through the sham and the fraud of the ATF’s declaration:

It is our opinion here at Bearing Arms that the explicit and implicit purpose of the Second Amendment is to ensure that the citizenry be armed with weapons and ammunition of contemporary military utility.

We hold that a ban on the most common forms of ammunition for the most common contemporary rifles for militia service is a gross and blatant violation of the letter and the spirit of the Second Amendment.

As Obama ramps up his efforts to further centralize power in Washington over his next two years in office, citizens may reasonably expect to see more efforts like this emanating from the ATF to remove precious rights. What’s clear is that Congress could end the ATF’s latest power grab by simply declaring the agency’s previous exemption of “green tip” ammunition to be permanent.

A graduate of an Ivy League school and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at www.LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics.



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