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**Statement of  
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**Introduction of Federal Legislation to Regulate 50 Caliber Anti-Armor Sniper Rifles**

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Thank you, Congressman Moran.

The Violence Policy Center commends you for taking the lead on this legislation and alerting the American people to the present danger of the unregulated sale of 50 caliber anti-armor rifles.

There is an urgent need for this legislation. The sale of 50 caliber anti-armor sniper rifles is one of the hottest trends in the American gun industry. In the last few years, the number of manufacturers making 50 caliber sniper rifles has at least tripled. The price of new models has plummeted to within easy reach of even a modest budget—from over \$7,000 to less than \$1,500.

The Violence Policy Center has documented in detail that these weapons of war are ideal tools for terrorism. Fifty caliber anti-armor sniper rifles can deliver enormously destructive power accurately over a range equal to 20 football fields. The United States Marine Corps, our special forces, and at least 17 of the world's armies issue 50 caliber sniper rifles to their elite units. The reason is that these "super guns" are extremely effective at destroying materiel targets—like fuel tanks, aircraft, and light armored vehicles—over staggering ranges. One need only imagine the many common civilian equivalents of these military targets to grasp the terrorist threat.

And yet, under federal law and the law of the vast majority of states, 50 caliber rifles are easier to buy legally than handguns.

Recently, the leading manufacturer of these rifles publicly agreed on CBS News's *Sixty Minutes* that the 50 caliber anti-armor sniper rifle can do what VPC studies say it can do. The industry's answer is to leave these guns unregulated, because they claim they need to sell them to civilians to stay in business. By that logic, we should allow plastic explosives, machine guns, nerve gas, and other weapons of war to be sold in gun stores to boost the profits of their manufacturers.

A nation at war with terrorism indulges this dangerous trend at its peril. Foreign terror organizations—including Osama bin Laden’s al Qaeda and the Irish Republican Army—have already come to the United States specifically to buy 50 caliber anti-armor sniper rifles. An array of dangerous domestic fringe groups also have stocked up on 50 caliber sniper rifles. They include a militia group in Michigan that planned to assassinate federal, state, and local officials.

These are just the cases we know about. No one really knows how many American-made 50 caliber anti-armor sniper rifles al Qaeda, or the IRA, or any other terrorist organization has bought in the United States, or where they may be now. Neither the FBI, nor the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, nor any other national agency knows—or has any way of knowing—who has stocked up on 50 caliber anti-armor sniper rifles and for what sinister purposes.

The time has so long past for a federal law that a number of states have given up waiting and begun regulating the 50 caliber anti-armor rifle on their own. California is the most recent example, where Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger last year signed a tough bill into law effectively banning new sales and possession. Other states are poised to act soon.

It is now time for President Bush, Attorney General Gonzalez, and the majority leadership in Congress to report for duty and back the federal legislation introduced today.

Thank you.

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***For Violence Policy Center reports on the threats posed by 50 caliber anti-armor sniper rifles, please visit [www.vpc.org](http://www.vpc.org).***