



WHY REGULATE 50 CALIBER SNIPER RIFLES?

- **Fifty caliber anti-armor sniper rifles are an ideal tool for terrorism. They are a real and present danger to national security, yet are less regulated than handguns.**

Fifty caliber sniper rifles are specifically designed to engage and destroy materiel targets on the battlefield at long range. These anti-armor rifles combine range and striking power that is far beyond that of any hunting rifle, and beyond that of the rifles our infantry carry. Armored personnel carriers, aircraft, rail tank cars, bulk fuel storage, and concrete bunkers are vulnerable to 50 caliber rifle fire at distances of 1,000 to 2,000 yards. Our soft civilian infrastructure—airports and the jetliners in them, rail cars carrying hazardous materials, and toxic chemical bulk storage plants—is even more open to attack by these rifles than its military counterpart.

Any 18 year old who can pass a Brady background check can buy a 50 caliber rifle under federal law. But one must be at least 21 years old to buy a handgun at a gun store.

- **Fifty caliber anti-armor sniper rifles are radically different from hunting rifles. They are specifically designed for great accuracy against harder targets at much longer distances than ordinary hunting or sporting rifles.**

Fifty caliber sniper rifles are not just big hunting rifles. They are “purpose-designed” and “purpose-built” weapons of war. This terminology is used in the firearms literature to describe weapons that are made for a specific, narrow purpose, in this case for sniping—highly accurate firing at a target from a significant distance.

Deer hunters generally shoot over ranges of 150 to 200 yards. One of the most common ammunition rounds used by deer hunters is the .30-30 cartridge, which is generally considered ineffective beyond approximately 200 yards. That is less than the distance from the West Front of the United States Capitol to the Rayburn House Office Building right next door. Fifty caliber rifles are accurate at ranges of at least 1,000 yards and, in the hands of a trained marksman, 2,000 yards. From the West Front of the Capitol, this range would allow accurate firing as far as the Smithsonian Metro station on the Mall.

- **Fifty caliber is the largest round of ammunition generally available to civilians and highly destructive armor-piercing, incendiary, and explosive rounds are easily available.**

Highly destructive military armor-piercing, armor-piercing incendiary, and even armor-piercing incendiary *explosive* ammunition for the 50 caliber rifle is widely available on the civilian market. One 50 caliber rifle manufacturer sells a variety of armor-piercing ammunition from its website. This ammunition can be ordered legally over the phone, and shipped by common carrier almost anywhere, no questions asked.

Under the National Firearms Act, passed in 1934, the sale of weapons which fire rounds any larger than 50 caliber is severely restricted. The same law restricts fully automatic machine guns, sawed-off shotguns, and hand grenades.

The destructive power of a sniper rifle firing 50 caliber rounds is difficult to overstate.

- **Terrorists and other dangerous groups have bought scores of these rifles—but no one knows who owns them or where they are in America today.**

Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda bought 25 Barrett 50 caliber anti-armor sniper rifles in the late 1980s. The IRA bought several in the United States, then shipped them abroad to kill British troops and Irish constables. The Cali cartel and other murderous drug syndicates have bought them. A Michigan militia group bought one as part of a plan to kill federal judges and elected officials. They are now showing up in the hands of lone wolf fanatics. As recently as February 2004, firefighters, police, and emergency personnel in Kansas City were blasted with a hail of 50 caliber rounds that left gaping holes in fire trucks and an ambulance—fired by a gun crazy fanatic who eventually died in a fiery siege.

America is in a war with terrorism. We should not be arming the terrorists with such destructive weapons of war. It is time to regulate 50 caliber sniper rifles by bringing them under the National Firearms Act, so that local and federal law enforcement agencies will, at the very least, know who has them.