

FIREARM TERMINOLOGY & POLICY BRIEF

TERMINOLOGY & BACKGROUND:

Overview of important terminology and distinctions that are used to persuade and obscure objectionable policies.

Assault Rifle vs. Assault Weapon vs. Modern Sporting Rifle

- i. Assault Rifles are “automatic” or “select-fire” weapons. Automatic weapons will fire continuously, with a single, continuous press of the trigger. They are “machine guns”. Select-fire weapons can operate as automatic fire, burst fire (typically, 3 bullets fired with a trigger press) or semi-automatic fire (single bullet fired with a single trigger press). An example would be a military M-16.
 - a) Assault Rifles/Machine Guns have been illegal to produce since 1986 under existing federal law. Older weapons can be purchased legally, but it requires expensive licensing and extensive background investigation. They are essentially unavailable.
- ii. “Assault Weapons” is a pejorative (and political) term for “semi-automatic” weapons, which fire a single bullet with each press of the trigger. They are designed with appearances that are like Assault Rifles, but operate in a semi-automatic mode, only. They have a military “appearance” but are not used by any standing army in the world. An example would be an AR-15.
- iii. Modern Sporting Rifle is a preferred term for modern, semi-automatic rifles. This is an alternate term for firearms that those favoring “gun control” describe as “Assault Weapons”. It is a game of words. Note that the AR-15 is the single most popular semi-automatic rifle in the country with an estimated 10-15 million owned by lawful gun owners. The standard model designation does not stand for “Assault Rifle – 15.” It derives from the original manufacturer – the Armalite Rifle Company (later acquired by Colt). The rifle is the “Armalite Rifle – Model 15” and was originally designed in the late 50’s/early 60’s.
 - a) The Modern Sporting Rifle is in very common use by lawful owners. Most common uses are Competitive Target Shooting, Varmint hunting (coyotes, wild pigs, various other nuisance vermin) and home protection.
 - b) They are popular for home protection, as they are easily customized with accessories to suit specific applications – special sights, flashlights, bi-pod stands for stability, etc... They are relatively easy to shoot, even for a young adult or a small female. They carry a misnomer of “High-Powered Rifle”, yet commonly shoot a bullet that is quite small (0.223” diameter) and lower powered than most hunting bullets (example, a 30-06, which is 0.30” diameter with a larger powder charge and resulting velocity).

High Capacity Magazines vs. Standard Capacity Magazines

- i. There is an effort by gun control advocates to limit the size of “magazines” (sometimes incorrectly referred to as “clips”) for both semi-automatic rifles and pistols. The most commonly proposed limit is 10 rounds. The argument is that larger magazines make firearms more deadly. In practice, magazine size has rarely resulted in more lethal situations – such as with an active shooter. The pace of fire in these incidents is often low and provides ample time to reload (install a new magazine in a matter of 2-3 seconds). Limiting the capacity of magazines only serves to limit the self- and home-defense options of lawful owners, as criminals rarely follow such laws, anyway.
- ii. The “Standard” capacity (factory-designed) magazine size for common, full-size handguns ranges from 8-18 rounds (cartridges or bullets). Prior regulations have made magazines limited to 10 rounds available. These are not “standard” and are a direct reaction to local or state regulations. Owners must purchase these at an added cost.
- iii. The “Standard” capacity (factory-designed) magazines for Modern Sporting Rifles are 30 rounds, although reduced capacity (20, 10 & 5 rounds) are available for purchase.
 - a) Larger, standard magazines (15 or more for pistols, 30 for rifles) are favored for home protection, as it allows for defense against multiple attackers, if required.
 - b) Larger magazine size is a distinct advantage when defending against multiple attackers or in a high-stress situation.
 - c) The policy balance is how you allow lawful owners to best defend their homes and family against potential attack from individuals that are (again) unlikely to follow the regulations, anyway.

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