

## Time to Renew Assault Weapon Ban

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***Why are military style assault weapons like those used in San Bernardino County Wednesday so easily and legally available? While it is obvious that a ban on assault weapon sales would not stop all types of gun crimes, we can certainly stop handing these murderers the weapon of their choice to kill us.***

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GREEN BAY – This week's murder of 14 people in San Bernardino County, and the wounding of 17 others by self styled terrorists at a holiday gathering of public service workers has many implications for all thinking Americans, but one question immediately jumps to mind. Why are military style assault weapons like those used Wednesday so easily available to any murderer, terrorist, or nut case who wants one?

Assault weapons are a class of semi-automatic firearms that are designed to kill humans quickly and efficiently. Assault weapons have been used in many high-profile shooting incidents, including Wednesday's massacre in California, the 2012 mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, the 2012 Aurora, Colorado movie theater, and many others.

A review of 62 mass shootings between 1982 and 2012 by Mother Jones found that assault weapons were recovered in almost a quarter of them. A review of mass shootings between January 2009 and January 2013 by Mayors Against Illegal Guns found that incidents where assault weapons or large capacity ammunition magazines were used resulted in 135% more people shot and 57% more killed, compared to other mass shootings.

A joint report by scholars in Mexico and the United States found that semi-automatic assault rifles sold in the U.S. are the most sought after and widely used weapons by Mexican drug trafficking organizations.

A study analyzing FBI data shows that 20% of the law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty from 1998 to 2001 were killed with assault weapons. Evidence from law enforcement leaders suggests that military-style assault weapons are increasingly being used against law enforcement by drug dealers and gang members.

A report by the International Association of Chiefs of Police recommended that Congress enact an effective ban on military-style assault weapons in order to curb the ability of criminals to “outgun” law enforcement officers.

A strong majority of Americans, including gun owners, consistently support laws prohibiting assault weapons. In a recent survey, 67% of Field & Stream readers polled did not consider assault weapons to be legitimate sporting guns.

In 1994, Congress adopted the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which made it “unlawful for a person to manufacture, transfer, or possess” a semiautomatic assault weapon. However, the law expired in 2004, despite overwhelming public support for its renewal and semi-automatic, military style weapons banned under the federal law are now legal unless banned by state or local law.

Gun manufacturers, their lobbyists, gun merchants, and the NRA spend millions of dollars each year fighting legislation to reenact the Assault Weapon Ban. We let them put their financial interest to sell guns and ammunition above the safety of our families by buying their bogus claim that somehow they are protecting our “rights”.

Assault weapons allow criminals and terrorists to fire more shots, wound and kill more individuals and inflict greater damage in the most deadly mass shootings. While it is obvious that a ban on assault weapon sales would not stop all types of gun crimes, we can certainly stop handing these murderers the weapon of their choice to kill us.

And if there is no political will to do something in Washington, we can certainly demand action from our political leaders right here in Wisconsin.

It is time for everybody to do something to stop the slaughter. Wake up and smell the bodies!

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