

Offensive Weapons Bill

Written evidence submitted by Simon Edwards

Section 28

Proposal to move rifles that can discharge a shot bullet or other missile with kinetic energy of more than 13,600 joules at the muzzle of the weapon to section 5 of the Firearms Act 1968; this amounts to a prohibition of these firearms.

In her summing, up Victoria Atkins stated that in one example she was given it was stated that the rifles are large and heavy and were capable of shooting the distance between London Bridge and Trafalgar Square – some 3500 meters.

Victoria also stated that there had been a recent increase in seizures at the UK border of higher power weaponry and ordinance, which were assessed to be destined for the criminal marketplace, and that the criminal marketplace is showing a growing demand for more powerful weaponry.

- 1) Can a rifle with 13,600 joules of Muzzle Energy shoot 3500 meters?

The answer is yes but I believe that Victoria Atkins has been misleading in the way she used this information.

- a. There is a vast difference between an aimed shot at a target and the distance a bullet will travel. At a recent long-range shooting event where 62 of the world's best target shooters assembled less than one third of the shooters were able to hit a 1m wide target and 1728 meters within 3 shots. An accurate 3500-meter shot is simply not realistic, outside being one of the world's best shooters supported by extremely expensive instruments and custom-made ammunition. At 3500 meters the retained energy of a 50 BMG bullet is only 13% of its muzzle energy, making it far less effective.
- b. 50BMG rifles seem to be the main target of the governments prohibition. In fact, 50BMG rifles are not as accurate or powerful at long range, as a number of rifles that fall below the government prohibition metric. As Victoria states these are "large heavy weapons" which makes them undesirable and I believe that criminals will be looking for smaller, lighter more practical weapons. A 50BMG rifle takes considerable practice and skill to shoot and generally target rifles are single shot with no magazine.

As target shooters we use the 50BMG cartridge because it is cheaper and reloading equipment and parts are easily available and in relative terms cheap.

- 2) Does an increase in the seizures of illegal higher-powered weapons indicate that criminals are attracted to firearms with a ME of > 13,600 joules?

We have no details on exactly what weapons were seized, however there appears to be a Home Office correlation between "higher-power" and weapons with a ME of greater than 13,600 joules. Were weapons with a ME of greater than 13,600 joules seized at the UK border?

Conclusion

In conclusion there is no science behind the 13,600-joule limit proposed in the above legislation and some of the points being put forward are in fact misleading. All rifles (they are not weapons in a target shooters view) are dangerous. Even a 30-calibre rifle hunting rifle is accurate at 900 meters and a good shooter can consistently hit a 1m target and the bullet can travel at least 3500 meters, a similar shot for a 50 Calibre rifle is only 30% further. The difference is that the 30 calibre is light and usually has a magazine that can carry 5 cartridges. As it stands section 28 of the Bill lacks evidence base and is badly thought out legislation, that will be costly and offer no improvement in public safety. Worse still this legislation only impacts a law-abiding section of society. Every single firearm holder in the UK undergoes comprehensive approval before being allowed to hold each and every firearm.

I believe that the prohibition of rifles with ME greater than 13,600 joules should be removed from the Bill and resubmitted as and when there is evidence that backs up this proposal. 50BMG rifles are simply not desirable for criminals or terrorists.

About myself

I am a keen target shooter and shoot with the Fifty Calibre Shooters Association (FCSA) as well as a number of other clubs. In 2019 I hope to travel to the USA and compete in the Long-Range World Championships. If this prohibition goes ahead I would lose that opportunity, potentially forever as I would lose any ability to practice in the UK.