

One Shot, One Kill

Civilian Sales of
Military Sniper Rifles

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The Violence Policy Center is a national non-profit educational organization that conducts research and public education on firearms violence and provides information and analysis to policymakers, journalists, grassroots advocates, and the general public. The Center examines the role of firearms in America, analyzes trends and patterns in firearms violence, and works to develop policies to reduce firearm-related death and injury.

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Violence Policy Center
1140 19th Street, NW
Suite 600
Washington, DC 20036

202-822-8200 phone
202-822-8205 fax
www.vpc.org web

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INTRODUCTION

For at least the last two decades, the firearms industry in the United States has repeatedly introduced progressively more lethal weapons into the civilian marketplace. This response to stagnation in gun sales has been apparent as each new deadly innovation has become more widely available, from semiautomatic pistols to military-style assault weapons to so-called “pocket rockets,” which are tiny, high-powered handguns. In each of these cases, the gun industry used increased lethality—increased killing power—as a principal selling point for civilians.¹

Today, another deadly innovation is becoming more prominent in the civilian marketplace, this one perhaps more lethal than any of its predecessors: the military sniper rifle. An extremely powerful weapon, the sniper rifle uses high-caliber ammunition at extraordinarily long ranges.

The sniper rifle is truly a military weapon, fielded by armies in conflicts around the world. U.S. armed forces, for example, used 50 caliber sniper rifles during the 1991 Gulf War to destroy Iraqi light armored vehicles, missiles, and artillery pieces at very long range.² Fifty caliber M88 sniper rifles from McMillan Gunworks (now Harris Gun Works) were reportedly used to disable aircraft belonging to Manuel Noriega during the 1989-1990 invasion of Panama.³

In fact, no less than one of the most highly respected journals on military matters in the world, *Jane's International Defense Review*, has concluded that “from an operational standpoint, the closest parallel weapon to a 0.50-calibre rifle is probably the 60mm mortar.”⁴

These same military armaments are now freely available across gun shop counters. As a result, the ideal tool for assassination and destruction is accessible to terrorists, criminals, or mentally unstable people here in the United States. For instance, two Barrett 50 caliber sniper rifles were in the arsenal of the Branch Davidian compound near Waco, Texas. Their presence was a major reason that law enforcement officials used armored personnel vehicles to protect their officers during the 1993 siege at the compound.

This report documents the dangers posed by the civilian sale of military sniper rifles. First, it explains what a sniper rifle is and shows its particularly dangerous capabilities. Next, it explores the gun industry's efforts to market sniper rifles and the resulting subculture of sniper enthusiasts that have turned discussion of this weapon into a cottage industry of books, web sites, computer games, and even sniper schools. Then it discusses selected instances when these weapons have been misused. Finally, it proposes public policy responses to this serious threat to America's national security.

SECTION ONE: The Capabilities of Sniper Rifles

“How can anyone exaggerate .50-caliber performance? Here’s a bullet that even at 1 1/2 miles crashes into a target with more energy than Dirty Harry’s famous .44 Magnum at point-blank.”

—John L. Plaster, *The Ultimate Sniper: An Advanced Training Manual for Military & Police Snipers*⁵

Sniper rifles are radically different from standard hunting rifles. Sniper rifles are “purpose-designed” and “purpose-built” weapons of war.^a 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 on a target from a significant distance. *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, for example, draws this distinction very clearly, explaining, “sniper rifles fall into two broad categories: modified versions of standard military or sporting rifles and purpose-designed weapons.”⁶

No single feature marks this special class of purpose-designed and purpose-built sniper rifles. Rather, the true sniper rifle is an amalgam of specific design features that make it “a bit better in many ways than its off-the-rack cousins to be an overall significantly more accurate weapon,” according to Maj. John L. Plaster (USAR), who is perhaps the preeminent sniper authority writing in the gun press today.⁷ “To build a sniper rifle,” observes Adrian Gilbert, another expert writer on the subject, “the manufacturer must use only the finest materials, ensure that tolerances are fined down to a minimum, and impose a draconian level of quality control.”⁸

Such “purpose-designed” and “purpose-built” sniper rifles are designed and manufactured for the purpose of killing human beings at more than five times the range hunters shoot deer, and to destroy “materiel” targets such as light armored vehicles and aircraft at distances of more than a mile.

This report uses the term “sniper rifle” strictly to refer to those that are “purpose-designed” and “purpose-built” for sniping. The characteristics and capabilities of a sniper rifle are explained in this section—in particular its unusual accuracy, range, and power. Appendix A explores the precise definition of a sniper

^a Thus, a “purpose-designed” rifle would be one that was intended from the drawing board to be a sniper rifle. A “purpose-built” sniper rifle, on the other hand, could include a rifle that was originally designed for another purpose, such as use as a standard infantry weapon, but was culled from the production line to be given close attention in manufacture.

rifle in greater detail.

Accuracy

The sniper's goal is to hit his human target with a precision summed up in the sniper's informal motto, "One shot, one kill."⁹ Thus, the most important attribute of a true sniper rifle is its *consistent* accuracy.

"The real test for any rifle claiming to be a sniper rifle is its accuracy," according to gun writer Frank James. "Although FBI statistics say the average police sniper shot in the United States is around 72 yards, the need still remains for the capability to hit an apricot size target at extended distances."¹⁰

This "apricot size" target, referred to frequently in sniper materials,¹¹ is the junction of the brain and brain stem. Hitting and destroying this point at the back of the human head with a single bullet will cause the person to instantly and completely collapse without reflex.¹² Snipers therefore call this spot "the apricot," and consider it the ideal target for achieving the ideal goal of "one shot, one kill."

There is a class of rifles, well recognized among gun experts, that are purpose-designed and purpose-built precisely to provide the consistent accuracy that snipers need. The accuracy of these sniper rifles is achieved largely by painstaking attention to engineering detail, explained more fully in Appendix A. The intention of this special design and manufacturing effort is to produce a rifle such that—all other things such as ammunition and the sniper's own ability being equal—when a sniper aims at a given spot, the rifle will consistently deliver the round to that spot.

The sniper must also be able to rely on the rifle's exact accuracy when he makes standard adjustments to take into account variables such as wind and distance. The rifle's "zero point" must be completely consistent, in order to serve as a benchmark against which the sniper compensates for these and similar variables. Again, consistent and predictable accuracy is the sniper rifle's hallmark.

These purpose-built rifles exist because modified versions of production line military or sporting rifles "are cheaper to produce than purpose-designed sniper rifles—as little as half the cost—but generally do not achieve the same degree of accuracy and consistency and are often more difficult to maintain."¹³

Such emphasis on accuracy makes the sniper rifle the exact opposite of another military weapon which has come into increasing civilian circulation, the semiautomatic assault weapon. The latter firearm, issued in the military to the ordinary infantryman, is designed to "hose down" a closer and broader area by laying

down a stream of rapid fire. Thus, “the sniper has little in common with today’s rifleman, who is typically equipped with a small-calibre, automatic weapon designed to deliver high rates of fire to ranges little beyond 300m.”¹⁴

Range

Sniper rifles can be used with great accuracy against targets at much longer distances than ordinary hunting or sporting rifles. Deer hunters, for example, shoot over ranges of 150 to 200 yards.¹⁵ One of the most common ammunition rounds used by deer hunters is the .30-30 cartridge, “which most hunters would consider ineffective beyond about 200 yards.”¹⁶ That is less than the distance from the West Front of the United States Capitol to the Rayburn House Office Building right next door.

Military snipers, by comparison, ordinarily engage their targets from ranges of 400 to 800 yards, and can double that range with large 50 caliber guns. Numerous engagements with the same weapon during the Gulf War took place at 1,600 meters, which is about 1,750 yards.¹⁷ From the West Front of the Capitol, this range would allow accurate firing as far as the Smithsonian Metro station on the Mall.

Even this distance does not express the limits of the sniper rifle’s capabilities. The longest-range confirmed sniper kill of the Gulf War was reported to have been made by a Barrett Model 82A1 sniper rifle at a range of 1,800 meters—nearly 2,000 yards, or almost 10 times the deer hunter’s maximum effective range. At some potential sacrifice to accuracy, a .50 sniper rifle can maintain its effectiveness at ranges of as much as 7,500 yards.

The longest confirmed kill in sniper history was at a distance of 1.42 miles in Vietnam, by U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant Carlos N. Hathcock.¹⁸ As discussed in Section Three of this report, the late Sgt. Hathcock has become a cult figure in the contemporary sniper subculture. From the same spot on the West Front of the Capitol, Hathcock’s shot would reach well past the Washington Monument.

While successful shots as long as Hathcock’s are unusual, the fact that they are at least possible with the aid of a sniper rifle highlights the mind-boggling range of these weapons.

Police snipers, who often face different tactical challenges than their military cousins, shoot at far closer ranges, usually within 100 yards.¹⁹ FBI statistics reportedly reveal that the average police sniper engagement distance is 71 yards.²⁰ Police snipers rely on the superior accuracy built into the military rifle, but prefer the closer shot because the consequences of even a single miss are more serious than

a miss on the battlefield:

The world does not come crashing to a halt if a military sniper misses a shot...a miss becomes only a "learning experience" for both sniper and target alike...In dramatic contrast, a police sniper must *never* be allowed the leeway to miss. When he misses, a hostage dies, a suspect escapes, or a fellow officer loses his life, all on national television with follow-up in the newspapers.²¹

A terrorist in a major city could take advantage of the sniper rifle's stunning potential range with the same impact as a soldier on a battlefield. Using a .50 sniper rifle, a marksman could hit a target beside the Pentagon in Virginia—while standing at the Lincoln Memorial or the Jefferson Memorial in Washington.

Power

The most destructive rounds fired by sniper rifles are 50 caliber—the largest round of ammunition generally available to civilians. Under the National Firearms Act, passed in 1934, weapons which fire rounds any larger than 50 caliber are severely restricted from civilian sale. 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. The weapon is, after all, purpose-designed and purpose-built in part to destroy enemy materiel.

The most powerful of these bullets, used in so-called "heavy" sniper rifles, is the .50 BMG (Browning machine gun) round. Half an inch thick and five and a half inches long, it has been in the U.S. military arsenal for 80 years. Originally developed during World War I as an anti-tank round, the .50 BMG first appeared in the U.S. Army's inventory as the Model 1921A1 Antiaircraft Machine Gun. Subsequent modifications of this heavy machine gun have been fielded by armies all over the world in a wide range of anti-personnel, anti-aircraft, and other anti-materiel uses.²²

The manufacturer of the Barrett Model 82A1, a .50 heavy sniper rifle, claims that the weapon can destroy armored personnel carriers, radar dishes, communications vehicles, and aircraft.²³ *Jane's International Defense Review* states that, depending on the exact round used, 50 caliber sniper rounds fired from distances as great as 300 meters can penetrate from 10 to 19 mm (.40 to .76 inches) of armor; 300 meters is only slightly less than the length of two football fields.²⁴ This level of penetration applies in the case of military-style armor. Penetration of steel protective shields could be even greater. The publication describes 50 caliber sniper rifles as a "force

multiplier' for light, non-mechanised units," with a "primary role" of the "destruction of vehicles, APCs [armored personnel carriers], helicopters, parked aircraft, fuel dumps and the like at ranges up to 2,000m" (nearly 2,200 yards). "The concept naturally appeals to special forces whose role includes creating mayhem behind enemy lines," the article notes.²⁵

Many more varieties of purpose-designed and purpose-built military sniper rifles are increasingly and aggressively being marketed to civilians in more conventional—but highly lethal—calibers. These are most often chambered in .308 Winchester, the civilian equivalent of the 7.62mm NATO military round. A recent trend is the marketing of sniper rifles in a so-called "intermediate" caliber, the .338 Lapua Magnum, which Jane's *International Defense Review* has described as "perhaps the ultimate in anti-personnel sniping," noting the round's "high-striking energy, which at 1,500m [about 1,640 yards] is three times that of 7.62mm NATO."²⁶ The .338 Lapua thus approaches the range and materiel smashing abilities of the 50 caliber heavy guns.

The extraordinary power and range of the 50 caliber "heavies" and the .338 Lapua Magnum "intermediates" create a whole new order of threat which is a source of concern for domestic law enforcement authorities. These rounds can knock down aircraft, including helicopters, and punch through concrete block, armored vehicles, and other materials that may be relied upon for executive protection. In fact, Barrett boasts that "the advantages are obvious when you consider that many of the same targets of rocket and mortar fire can be neutralized" with its 50 caliber model.²⁷

Beyond the mere size of the round, other factors can increase the sniper rifle's tremendous destructive potential, including semiautomatic models and the use of armor-piercing rounds—both perfectly legal.

Semiautomatic heavy sniper rifle models like the Barrett Model 82A1 and the Knight's Manufacturing Co. SR-50 can deliver repeated, accurate, and devastating long-range blows far more swiftly than slower bolt-action models.^b The Barrett semiautomatic, for example, is said to have an accurate rate of fire of 10 or 11 rounds per minute.²⁸ One expert enthusiast described several scenarios in which the semiautomatic sniper rifle is superior to the bolt action. These include shooting at a moving target and shooting through automotive glass. When firing a semiautomatic sniper rifle at a moving limousine, for example, even if the first round is deflected, it will likely punch open a hole for subsequent rounds.²⁹

^b Bolt-action rifles require the sniper to manually pull back and forth the handle on a "bolt" to eject each spent round and load a new one. Semiautomatic rifles automatically eject each spent round and require only that the trigger be pressed again to fire a fresh round. This process can continue rapidly until the ammunition magazine (also called a "clip") is exhausted. Semiautomatic sniper rifle magazines often hold 10 rounds.

Sniper rifles which use armor-piercing rifle rounds further magnify the power—and the threat—of these deadly weapons. Federal law restricts only armor-piercing *handgun* rounds, not armor-piercing *rifle* rounds. When fired from a sniper rifle, even at long distances, armor-piercing rifle rounds can punch through advanced body armor that is capable of stopping submachine gun rounds at close range.³⁰

In addition to the obvious danger to human life, such capabilities in the hands of a sniper could wreak havoc by destroying exposed equipment essential to the functioning of critical domestic infrastructures, such as switches, transformers, generators, radar, and other elements of communications, transportation, and power networks—from well beyond the range of any guard forces that may be posted.³¹ Such materiel destruction is exactly what the U.S. military reportedly used sniper rifles for in Panama and the Persian Gulf. Sold over the counter at an American gun shop, the same destruction could be turned on Americans at home.

Defining Sniper Rifles: The Semantic Trap

A precise definition of the sniper rifle is vital because of the frequently loose use of sniper terminology. After all, virtually any rifle can be used to shoot without warning from concealment at another human being. In fact, the news media commonly report such ambush shootings as “sniper” attacks, regardless of the type of gun involved or the range from which the shooting was done. “Any nut with a gun is referred to as a sniper,” a Delray, Florida police sniper complained. “He may not be able to fire a handgun across the room and hit the opposite wall, but because he pointed a gun out a window and started firing shots, he then is called a sniper.”³²

The gun lobby is quick to use this imprecision to score rhetorical points. National Rifle Association President Charlton Heston recently predicted in *Guns & Ammo* magazine, “Someone will commit a terrible crime with a hunting rifle, and suddenly your deer rifle or benchrest gun will be demonized by the anti-gun media as a sinister ‘sniper rifle’ capable of killing children and police from great distances.”³³ The serious threat described in this report has nothing to do with Heston’s garden-variety criminal taking potshots from hiding with a hunting rifle, but his accusation resonates with readers of *Guns & Ammo* because sniper terminology is sometimes used so loosely. For this reason, adhering to the rigorous definition outlined in Appendix A is very important.

To be sure, the casual use of the word “sniper” to refer to a gun does not make it a sniper rifle. However, the studied avoidance of the word “sniper” in reference to a purpose-designed or purpose-built sniper rifle does not make it something different.

Like Heston, the gun industry recognizes that words that evoke images of killing human beings, like “sniper,” can attract criticism—and might even have the legal effect of triggering federal import restrictions.^c It therefore has invented euphemistic labels, such as “tactical rifle,” which are well understood within the gun culture as “wink and nod” terms for true sniper rifles.

This type of semantic evasion is nothing new for the firearms industry, which practiced a similar switch in terminology as semiautomatic assault weapons became more controversial.³⁴ In the case of sniper rifles, the evasion is discussed openly in publications written for the sniper culture. Expert Mike R. Lau, for example, explained the matter in detail in his recent book, *The Military and Police Sniper*. His thoughts are worth quoting at length because they clearly establish that rigorous definitions are a clearer method for identifying sniper rifles than industry labels:

Some manufacturers come right out and tell you what kind of tactical shooting the rifle was designed for. However, the use of the word “sniper” in the nomenclature is sometimes politically incorrect so the rifle takes on other names, but underneath all of that it may have been originally designed as a sniper rifle. Usually the agency or the actual user of the rifle will give away it’s [sic] tactical purpose. Many foreign sniper rifles cannot be imported into the US if they carry the word “sniper” in their nomenclature and have to be renamed “target,” “long range,” “precision varmint with sniper accuracy,” “marksman,” “sharpshooter,” etc. To display products at the annual SHOT Show [the gun industry’s annual trade show] the promoters prefer that your rifle or any product not have any reference to shooting human targets. Norm Chandler was hassled at the SHOT Show in Dallas one year when he displayed his “Chandler Sniper” rifle and *Death From Afar* books on a table. Benelli and HK [two foreign gun manufacturers] were also at the show with all their combat weapons and so were many other manufacturers and dealers because the way many firearms sell today is “tactical.” As an example, we know the Marine Corps M40 rifle, developed for the Marines during the Vietnam War by Remington Arms, was not originally intended to be a SWAT or varmint (animal type) rifle. However, it was soon brought out as the “Varmint Special” and later the “Police Sniper Special” or PSS. Today’s current police model is labeled the Remington 700P.³⁵

^c Federal law requires that any firearm proposed to be imported into the United States have a “sporting purpose” (with exceptions for police or military use). However, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms is notoriously lax in its administration of this requirement and has clearly allowed the import of military sniper rifles under other names.

The writings of other gun experts confirm this dissembling. "In these politically correct times," writer Mark Adkins stated in a September 1998 review of the SIG SG550 Sniper, "terms such as 'Sporter', 'Match', and 'Target' inappropriately find their names attached to rifles which, in more innocent days, would have been given titles containing letters and numbers designating a military heritage."³⁶

Peter Kokalis, a writer for *Soldier of Fortune* magazine, penned a similar thought recently when he described the title of the "Precision Rifle" training course at the civilian Thunder Ranch as "the politically correct term for *Countersniper*."³⁷ The equivalence of the terms "tactical" and "sniper" was also underscored in a blurb in *Guns & Weapons for Law Enforcement* touting as "a new sniper manual" a handbook titled *The Tactical Marksman*.³⁸

In short, a sniper rifle by any other name is still as deadly. A sniper rifle is best recognized by how it is made and what it is capable of doing—whether it is "purpose-designed" and "purpose-built" for sniping. This firearm is set apart from others not principally by language, but by its exceptional accuracy, range, and power.

SECTION TWO: The Marketing of Sniper Rifles

“In an exclusive interview, Robar president Robert Barrkman, himself a world-class competitive shooter, told the author that the proliferation of sniper weapons is one of the few growth areas that exist for small-arms makers.”

–Jane’s *International Defense Review*³⁹

The accuracy, range, and power of a sniper rifle could present a grave danger if used by a determined criminal or a deranged gunman, and a serious threat to national security in the hands of a terrorist. These real hazards appear to be of no concern to the American firearms industry in its efforts to sell the gun to civilian customers.

Indeed, as the gun industry struggles against sliding sales and a saturated market for firearms, it sees the military heritage and destructive potential of the sniper rifle as positive elements in its civilian sales pitch. Apparently, the pitch is working. The ATF’s inexact data makes it difficult to calculate numbers, but estimates of the number of .50 sniper rifles range as high as 15,000 to 20,000 manufactured for the civilian market between the early 1980s (when Barrett began selling them) and March 1997.⁴⁰

The firearms industry has suffered a serious market slump for years, caused principally by the shrinking number of Americans who own guns. According to a 1997 Police Foundation survey, the proportion of households in the United States that own firearms is declining markedly, and firearms ownership is increasingly concentrated in a minority of hands. Only one quarter of adults in the United States own a gun.⁴¹ Lucian Truscott, an astute observer of the sniper culture, noted the effect of this aggregation in a *New York Times* op-ed: “It’s not abnormal today for individual gun owners to have 50 or more guns—the approximate number of weapons an entire infantry platoon would carry.”⁴²

The industry has strived to maintain its profitability by pursuing innovations that allow it to sell more and more guns to this smaller and smaller core of customers. As the industry publication *Shooting Sports Retailer* reported:

Some industry observers claim that makers are desperate to get anything they can call “new” onto retail gun racks...Many agree that manufacturers are falling short in introducing innovative new concepts in firearms to lead us into the next millennium. They are doing the next

best thing, however, providing firearms that address specific needs for specific situations.⁴³

In other words, the gun industry is desperately searching for products—any products—that can spark sales in specialized market “niches” that are not as stagnant as the overall gun market. The civilian sniper rifle market has become one of those niches. Like assault weapons and pocket rockets before it, the sniper rifle is innovative for one big reason: it reaches a new level of lethality.⁴⁴

A study of gun industry advertising and promotional literature, and of articles in the gun press and on the Internet, documents how the gun industry is developing and marketing military sniper rifles to civilians. These efforts began in the early 1980s, but became much more aggressive over the last six years.

Purpose-designed rifles built from the ground up specifically for the purpose of military sniping are a relatively new phenomenon. Throughout most of the history of military sniping, the sniper’s rifle was either an upgraded service rifle (sometimes hand-picked from production lines), or a sporting rifle—a less satisfactory choice because such weapons are not designed to withstand the rigors of the battlefield.

According to sniper expert and author Adrian Gilbert, the first real military sniper rifle was the Soviet SVD, tested in 1959 and fielded by the Soviet Army in 1963.⁴⁵ Not coincidentally, the Dragunov is a very popular model in the U.S. civilian market today:

The West was slow to follow the Soviet lead and it was only in the late 1970s and the 1980s...that dedicated sniper rifles were introduced. Since then, however, they have been produced in profusion, manufacturers vying with each other to improve on existing designs.⁴⁶

The firearms industry frequently transfers firearms and firearms technology developed specifically for the military to civilian markets. Sniper rifles are no exception. Having produced a “profusion” of sniper rifles, the gun industry has increasingly moved them into the civilian market. A *Guns & Ammo* writer recently put the sniper rifle trend in context with the industry’s overall rifle trend, and summed up its significance for the bottom line:

Brush rifles, varmint rifles, plains rifles, “assault” rifles and beanfield rifles have all had their moment in the sun. At one time or another, all have been the focal point of experimentation, media coverage and general reader fascination. Not to mention sales. Now it seems we are in the era of the tactical rifle.⁴⁷

One of the early signs of the rising trend came in a 1993 article in Jane's *International Defense Review*. The story reported that "in an exclusive interview, Robar president Robert Barrkman...told the author that the proliferation of sniper weapons is one of the few growth areas that exist for small-arms makers."⁴⁸ Robar vigorously markets its sniper rifles to civilians.

To exploit this "growth area," sniper rifle manufacturers promote the weapons by emphasizing their military lineage and lethality. The makers of the semiautomatic Barrett Model 82A1 rifle enthusiastically describe their product in an advertising brochure as "the most widely used .50 caliber by military organizations around the world...successfully used against a large variety of targets, often at staggering ranges."⁴⁹

The Barrett, of course, is only one of a growing number of .50 BMG sniper rifles that are now being sold on the U.S. civilian gun market.⁵⁰ As the sniper craze has begun to spread within the gun culture, other innovations in the design have been made to retain the interest—and hopefully the dollars—of sniper rifle aficionados. These changes have greatly expanded the variety of sniper rifles available to civilians. A 1998 book on sniping rifles and sniping skills succinctly and candidly summarized these industry actions. Note that the author clearly treats "target rifles" as a different class than "sniper" or "tactical" rifles:

Demand for sniper rifles has encouraged many firearms manufacturers to produce long range tactical rifles. Competing for rifle sales has kept pricing reasonable. Just like the target rifle did in the past, sniper rifle demand is directly responsible for much of the changes in stock designs, improved barrel quality, improved scope sights, improved ammunition and components, and much more. As a result, the entire firearms industry, including the shooter, has benefited.⁵¹

This innovation *within* the newly created category of the "civilian sniper rifle" marks the creation of a new niche. As it has done in the past, the gun industry has stimulated a demand for incredibly lethal firearms with no conceivable sporting purpose, all as part of a campaign to resell to a saturated market—the pursuit of lethality for profit. As we shall see in the next section, the rise of the high-priced sniper rifle has been accompanied by the rise of a sniper subculture that lavishes great attention on the legends and lore surrounding this deadly weapon.

SECTION THREE: The Sniper Rifle Subculture

“For reasons that escape me entirely, an entire subculture has developed around sniper rifles.”

—Lucian Truscott, op-ed, *The New York Times*⁵²

The profligate sale of military sniper rifles in the civilian market is cause for concern. Perhaps even more alarming is the cultural context in which the gun industry sells sniper rifles. Even a modest review of the evidence reveals that a sniper subculture is burgeoning within the American civilian gun culture. This subculture glorifies the sniper fantasy, diminishes its human cost, and teaches everything about sniping—from equipment and shooting skills to military and police sniping tactics.

The civilian sniper culture is fed by the gun industry, nurtured by a fawning gun press, and disseminated through an array of commercial media enterprises. Industry advertising, favorable gun press articles, books, motion pictures, videos, video games, posters, and even tee shirts promote the sniper mystique. The subculture even has its own cult figure, the late Carlos Hathcock, who as a Marine sniper in Vietnam was credited with the longest confirmed kill in history.

It defies experience to believe that this blizzard of violent fantasy will not effect the greater society. The perpetrators of the massacre at Columbine High School and the Oklahoma City bombing were deeply immersed in the netherworld of the American gun culture. These tragedies remind us that we cannot afford to ignore any perversity of that culture, however obscure or bizarre it may seem. The sniper subculture in particular combines two dangerous currents—it has a mordant appeal for unstable personalities, and it offers an ideal weapon for terrorism.

An idea of the suggestive mordancy that attends the subject of sniping is reflected in a recent advertisement in *Guns & Ammo* magazine promoting the Military Book Club’s sniper-related books: “Read about the weapon that makes men *SHIVER*.”⁵³

Graphic descriptions of sniper wounds in these books may also have peculiar effects on impressionable or unstable minds. The following very explicit excerpt from *Marine Sniper: 93 Confirmed Kills*, for example, recounts the shooting of a Vietnamese sniper by American sniper Carlos Hathcock:

The bullet cracked from the barrel, arched past the lower elbow of the hill, and struck the target.

In that same instant, the old man jerked his final shot, as half his face and the portion of his head above his right ear exploded in a crimson spray. The bullet's impact separated the man from his rifle and hurled him backward into the field. His suddenly lifeless body leaped skyward, violently kicking and crashing through the sugarcane.

Several Marines who sat behind the sandbags on the hill's finger heard the sniper's shot. They peeked over the top and witnessed the gory sight of the man's dead body reeling in uncontrolled acrobatics—whipping, kicking, jumping.

Hathcock watched through his scope, tracking the nearly headless body as it flopped and crashed through the cane field. Several of his head shots had ended in similar displays of dancing dead, but this was the most gruesome. The sight repulsed him, and he turned his head away.⁵⁴

An example from *The Military and Police Sniper* is more clinical but nonetheless illustrates the type of material in the sniper subculture that may appeal to disturbed persons (emphasis is in the original):

The aiming point for the *instant kill shot* is a two inch by four inch area running through the eyes and ears and a two inch wide band running down the nose when viewed from the front of the face. A shot in this area will usually result in *flaccid relaxation or instant paralysis* and the body will fall like a 'sack of potatoes.' A rifle bullet traveling at high velocity (usually over 1800 fps) may cause flaccid relaxation even if it is within 2 inches of the medulla oblongata due to *hydrostatic shock*.⁵⁵

The issue is not whether true military and police snipers, who are carefully screened and thoroughly trained in controlled environments, need to know such disturbing things. It is rather the effect of such lurid details on disturbed persons or persons with bad motives and intentions, especially when the firearms described are available for civilian purchase.

Of course, the materials we describe will not necessarily inspire wrongdoing in and of themselves. Nor will they alone make a person an expert sniper. Nonetheless, there is more than enough instructional material available in the sniper subculture to roil troubled minds and teach home-grown terrorists or impressionable juveniles how to use the destructive capabilities of sniper rifles to maximum effect. As we have seen in too many tragedies, this combination can be deadly.

Popular literature about sniping and snipers, such as that described above, is voluminous and growing. The Violence Policy Center does not advocate censorship of that literature, but believes that it is important to understand its dimensions and content as a tangible artifact of the sniper subculture.

The Gun Press

The American gun press is a marketing complement to the gun industry. With few exceptions, articles in gun “fan” magazines enthusiastically promote specific guns and gun usage in general with “puff pieces” and adulatory reviews. These articles often are timed to coincide with the introduction of new firearms or to help gun manufacturers promote specific marketing themes.⁵⁶ As the gun industry magazine *Shooting Sports Retailer* recently observed, “Like it or not, the firearms press is the single biggest driver of new product sales.”⁵⁷

Articles about sniping and sniper rifles are becoming increasingly common in the fan magazines of the popular gun press. These include features about military and police sniper teams or shooting competitions with sniper rifles,⁵⁸ and reviews of specific sniper rifles available on the civilian market.⁵⁹ *Tactical Shooter*, which began publication in January 1998 and is devoted entirely to the subject of “tactical shooting,” or sniping, opined in its maiden issue that the “real future of tactical shooting...like it or not...is at the civilian level.”⁶⁰

Increased attention such as these articles in the gun press is a reliable indicator of the gun industry’s marketing focus, signaling the industry’s desire to stimulate a particular demand. A revealing insight into how this link operates in practice is found in an article reviewing the Erma SR 100 sniper rifle in *Gun World* magazine. The author described how Robin Sharpless, a representative of the importer, H&R 1871, pitched the sniper rifle to him at the 1996 annual industry SHOT Show:

“Hey Steve,” Sharpless whispered urgently, “I’ve got something GUN WORLD has to check out. It’s a natural for you guys!”

Okay. I’m game. I like break-open single-shot shotguns for most kinds of hunting and especially for taking wild turkeys. I envisioned a new turkey gun. What a surprise when Sharpless pulled the big Erma sniper rifle from behind the door!

Some firearms “talk,” and this particular rifle screamed!⁶¹

Sniper Books

Just as sniper rifles are increasingly “talking” from the pages of popular gun fan magazines, so are books about snipers and sniping proliferating in amazing number. A search using the word “sniper” at Amazon.com on April 27, 1999 returned a list of 63 books. These books are frequently reviewed⁶² or advertised in gun magazines⁶³ and catalogs.⁶⁴ Specialized sniper web sites highlight the books and link to commercial sites such as Amazon.com where they can be ordered.⁶⁵

Recent titles reviewed by the Violence Policy Center fall into three general categories: the history of sniping, sniping rifles, and “how-to” sniping manuals. Sniper histories include such titles as *Stalk and Kill: The Sniper Experience*,⁶⁶ *Sniper: The Skills, the Weapons, and the Experiences*,⁶⁷ *Marine Sniper: 93 Confirmed Kills*,⁶⁸ and *Police Sniper*.⁶⁹ Reviews of sniping rifles include books such as *The World's Sniping Rifles*,⁷⁰ *Modern Sniping Rifles*,⁷¹ and *The Poor Man's Sniper Rifle*.⁷²

Several recent volumes are comprehensive manuals for snipers and would-be snipers. They include *The Ultimate Sniper: An Advanced Training Manual for Military & Police Snipers*,⁷³ *The Military and Police Sniper: Advanced Precision Shooting for Combat and Law Enforcement*,⁷⁴ and *SEAL Sniper Training Program*.⁷⁵ These books cover weapons, tactics, and techniques in detail.

The potential use of these publications becomes more problematic when they are viewed in the broader context of the many other war-making manuals sold through outlets that cater to the gun culture. Among many others widely advertised, the Violence Policy Center obtained and reviewed such titles as *Urban Combat: A Guide to Combat in Built-up Areas*⁷⁶ (which includes a section on “Employment of Snipers”), *The Militia Battle Manual* (which describes itself as “a manual for the modern rebel operating out of an industrialized society”),⁷⁷ *Training Handbook of the American Underground*,⁷⁸ and *Defending Your Retreat: A Manual for Combat After the Collapse*.⁷⁹

An idea of the millennialist themes these books pursue can be gained from the following comments from *Defending Your Retreat*:

Very soon our basic survival may depend on our ability to defend our possessions, families, and homes...As I write this, I can imagine some prospective retreaters reading these words and wondering how paranoid I must be...The large number of state and federal armories scattered around the country may at first seem a blessing. In the long run, however, they may constitute the ultimate threat to our existence...⁸⁰

Sniper Videotapes

Videotapes about snipers and sniping are also proliferating, advertised in the same ways as sniper books.⁸¹ One Internet web site, Ultimate Weapons Systems (www.uws.com), offered nine different sniper videos, the majority of which are apparently instructional.⁸² Here are the web site's descriptions of two of them:

U.S.M.C. Marine Scout/Sniper (2 video set): This new Video will show you the tactics and techniques that made the USMC scout/sniper the best in the world. Learn from the pros as they re-create their most dangerous missions. Live fire of an authentic M40A-1 and see how it matches up to the British SAS AW Rifle. Find out why the Top-secret Raufoss Round is the most effective Sniper ammo. Learn U.S.M.C. tactics in combat scenarios based on real (and classified) "Hot" situations. Crammed with facts, Corps lore, and combat lessons learned the hard way, this film is truly certain to increase your knowledge of combat sniping and the Scout/Sniper program.

Marine Sniper: The Marine Sniper must be able to hit a stationary target at 1000 yards with one round. Can you do it? Learn the secrets.⁸³

Video Games

Gun makers and the video game industry are also capitalizing on the fascination with sniping. Head Games Publishing, in cooperation with Remington, last year introduced an interactive shooting game for personal computers called "Remington Top Shot." The product features the Remington M24 sniper rifle, in addition to other weapons like the AK-47 assault rifle. According to Head Games, the software "delivers an authentic trigger-blasting game in which players feel their pulse quicken as they ready for the shot."⁸⁴

Sniper Schools

Another recent phenomenon is the growth of civilian sniper training schools. The *CBS Evening News* reported that as of March 1999 there were eight such schools, and "two more soon to follow."⁸⁵ Although some of these schools may be restricted to law enforcement or active duty military personnel, others are open to civilians. Press reports of on-site visits to schools indicate that at least three such schools are open to civilians: Thunder Ranch in Texas,⁸⁶ Gunsite Training Center in Arizona,⁸⁷ and Storm Mountain Training Center in West Virginia.⁸⁸

Web Sites

There are numerous sniper-related Internet web sites. A few representative sites among many others devoted specifically to sniper rifles and sniping include:

- “Sniper Country” (www.aspire.net/snipercountry/sniper.htm) offers extensive links to other sites, as well as links to books, articles, events, history, and “tools of the trade,” among other things.
- “Sniper’s Paradise” (www.snipersparadise.com) opines that “the sniping profession is misunderstood by many” and offers links to books, equipment, classes, and “essays and papers,” among other things.
- “Mel’s Sniper Page” (www.imt.net/~mele/index.html) is “intended to provide useful information to both military snipers and law enforcement sharpshooters.”

Gear

A wide variety of sniper-related gear is also marketed to the sniper subculture. These include such items as tee shirts bearing mottos like “One shot, one kill” and “Long Distance—reach out and touch someone,” posters (including Nazi recruiting and sniper posters), and sniper camouflage outfits (known as Ghillie suits).

The Cult of Carlos Hathcock

No discussion of the sniper subculture would be complete without reference to the late Carlos Hathcock, a Marine Corps sniper in the Vietnam War. Hathcock’s exploits, recounted in his own book and a video about him,⁸⁹ were indeed phenomenal. He is credited with 93 confirmed kills in the Vietnam War and the longest confirmed sniper kill in history (with a .50 BMG rifle). Hathcock has become a singularly mythic hero of the sniper subculture. Competitions are held to raise money in his name,⁹⁰ web pages offer tributes to him, and posters featuring his image are sold. He has become the John Wayne of the sniper culture.

For example, Mel’s sniper web site contains a “tribute to Carlos Hathcock... [who] will always be remembered as a true American Hero, a legendary sniper, and a gentleman.”⁹¹ Contrasting Hathcock to President Bill Clinton and actor Sylvester Stallone (who will “forever be known as Rambo, though he was teaching gymnastics

to girls in Switzerland during the Vietnam War"), *Soldier of Fortune* suggested that Congress award Hathcock a special medal.⁹²

SECTION FOUR: The Threat of Sniper Rifles

“Given the suspected weaponry of the Branch Davidians, it would have been advisable to have had at least three of these armored vehicles [Bradley Fighting Vehicles] standing by at the Command Post.”

—John A. Kolman, Expert Report for the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Waco Administrative Review⁹³

Just as the sniper rifle is the functional opposite of the assault weapon on the battlefield, the threat of the sniper rifle in civilian hands is the inverse of the dangers posed by assault weapons. Assault weapons entered into fairly wide civilian circulation and were used by malcontents who capitalized on their spray-fire capability to shoot indiscriminately. Sniper rifles are not produced in large quantities, and cost far more than most other firearms, including assault weapons. As a result, the danger of the sniper rifle does not come from widespread availability, but from a relatively small number of weapons used by shooters who take advantage of their deadly combination of accuracy, range, and power.

This different threat is no less real. If sniper rifles remained merely the object of lurid fantasy for a sect of the American gun culture, the danger would be minimal. In fact, counter-terrorism experts and other law enforcement figures are seriously concerned about the potential use of sniper rifles for assassination and for criminal destruction of materiel—anything from aircraft to crucial physical components of the nation’s critical infrastructure, such as radar or public utility switching facilities, among others. Although the ability of sniper rifles in the standard NATO round (.308 Winchester in the civilian market) to damage material targets is significant,⁹⁴ the well-documented power of the heavy 50 caliber and intermediate .338 Lapua Magnum rounds to penetrate and destroy even armored materiel at long range is still greater.

For understandable reasons, professional security personnel are reluctant to publicly discuss the threat of assassinations or attacks on infrastructure. Their concerns are well-founded. The available evidence suggests that sniper rifles are already falling into the hands of people who are capable of turning such scenarios into tragic reality. The following three diverse examples, in which assailants used or planned to use .50 sniper rifles, illustrate the threat that these weapons pose to national security. All three cases involve civilians who purchased the weapons in the United States.

Branch Davidians

Perhaps the most well-known instance in which law and order were threatened by civilian-owned sniper rifles occurred at the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas. David Koresh and his followers reportedly had several 50 caliber sniper rifles among the weapons in their substantial arsenal.⁹⁵ The presence of these powerful long-range weapons influenced the decision of ATF agents to storm the compound rather than maintain a siege, a decision that led to the fatalities of four ATF agents and the death of at least three Davidians in the initial assault. In fact, one of the medics who struggled unsuccessfully to reach a fallen agent “had one of his medical bags shot out of his hand by .50-caliber gunfire.” The fallen agent was among those who died.⁹⁶

After the ATF raid failed, the Federal Bureau of Investigation took over the siege of the compound and utilized armored vehicles to protect against potential sniper rifle fire. Anyone concerned about the increasing militarization of American police forces should note that the presence of 50 caliber weapons forced civilian law enforcement officers to adopt military-style defensive measures.

Anti-Castro Operatives

On August 25, 1998, a federal grand jury indicted seven Cuban exiles on charges of plotting to murder Cuban President Fidel Castro with a sniper rifle. The charges stemmed from the interception of a sea-going yacht, *La Esperanza*, by a U.S. Coast Guard cutter on October 27, 1997. *La Esperanza*, which had been modified to give it the range to cruise throughout the Caribbean, was registered in Miami and manned by four of the Cuban exiles who were later indicted. A search of the vessel uncovered two 50 caliber Barrett sniper rifles, ammunition for the rifles, night vision equipment, and a hand-held device for pin-pointing location using the global positioning satellite system.⁹⁷

According to the indictment and news reports, the exiles planned to assassinate Castro during a meeting of Latin American heads of state at Isla Margarita, a Venezuelan island resort. The conspirators had previously scouted a hilltop vantage point overlooking the island’s airport, from which they allegedly planned to use the Barrett rifles either to shoot down Castro’s airplane or shoot the Cuban leader as he exited the plane.

This example particularly underscores the grave assassination threat posed by the long-range sniper rifle.

Irish Republican Army

Several sources, including Jane's *Intelligence Review*, have reported that the terrorist Irish Republican Army acquired at least one Barrett .50 BMG Model 82A1 and used it to kill British soldiers at long range.⁹⁸ According to a recent article in *The Irish Times*, after the British Army adopted the tactic of protecting its troops from massive land mines by keeping them in fortified compounds, the IRA sent agents to the United States to acquire Barrett rifles for long-range sniping attacks. Although several Barretts were intercepted by authorities, the IRA acquired at least one. An IRA sniper unit reportedly killed its first victim with the Barrett on August 25, 1992, shooting 18-year-old Private Paul Turner through his body armor, killing him instantly as he stood at a checkpoint on the outskirts of Crossmaglen.⁹⁹

The notion that insurgents in another country traveled to the United States to purchase sniper rifles on the open market provides chilling perspective on the easy availability of the weapons in this country and their attractiveness to terrorists.

Given the nature of the sniper subculture in the United States, it is entirely legitimate to ask whether home-grown insurgents might not learn from this example. Viewed in that light, the political sentiments expressed in some books within the sniper milieu take on a more alarming face. The following quote from *The Militia Battle Manual* is a perfect example:

You may ask, 'why should anyone be interested in this military stuff? This is America, we are a free society, and we have a powerful Army to defend us.' To this I reply, what are you, special? Do you think that just because you live in America you are immune to oppression, or foreign occupation? Just how free is this society you were told was free and for how much longer? What makes you think that the Army is around just to protect you anyway?¹⁰⁰

For those interested in forming their own miniature armies, the gun industry is apparently willing to provide the tools.

SECTION FIVE: *Solving the Sniper Rifle Problem*

In 1988, the Violence Policy Center issued a report warning of the menace of growing civilian sales of military-style semiautomatic assault weapons. At the time, that weapon was viewed by many observers as a rare and esoteric firearm, unlikely to cause significant problems in crime. Of course, that view changed rapidly. Assault weapons became the sidearm of choice for drug kingpins and gang members on American streets. They were used in massacres from a schoolyard in Stockton, California to a law office in San Francisco to the headquarters of the Metropolitan Police Department in Washington, D.C. Finally, Congress took some action in the 1994 assault weapons ban—although the use of a TEC DC-9 at Columbine High School serves as a recent reminder that far more still needs to be done to control assault weapons.

Once again, the gun industry has begun aggressively marketing a military weapon to civilians. Once again, there are early examples of the misuse of sniper rifles, and it is easy to predict other scenarios in which the weapons could be used by criminals or terrorists in the near future. Once again, in the interests of national security and public safety, a swift response is warranted—before the inevitable tragedy involving sniper rifles occurs.

The Violence Policy Center proposes the following strategy for dealing with the deadly consequences that are certain to follow this cynical gun-industry marketing campaign.

Add Heavy and Intermediate Sniper Rifles to the National Firearms Act

The failure of the federal assault weapons ban demonstrates the likely futility of successfully controlling all forms of sniper rifles through statute.^d Congress, however, should immediately amend federal law to bring heavy and intermediate sniper rifles (.50 BMG, .338 Lapua, and perhaps others) under the National Firearms Act. This action would subject these weapons to the same regimen of registration, background checks, taxation, and special permits to which other weapons of war, such as machine guns and destructive devices, are currently subjected.

^d The 1994 law was fatally crippled by compromises in drafting and anemic enforcement by the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). The gun industry has so aggressively exploited the loopholes in this law that more candid observers consider it a failure.

Evaluate an Import Ban on Sniper Rifles

In the case of imported sniper rifles, the President does not need to wait for Congress to take action. He should immediately order the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to review whether these weapons pass the “sporting purposes” test^e that controls which firearms can be brought into the United States. ATF currently denies importation to unsafe, ultra-concealable “junk guns” and foreign-made assault weapons because they fail the sporting purposes test. Given the combat mission of “purpose-designed” and “purpose-built” sniper rifles, it seems likely that these weapons would be barred from import under this standard.

Improve Reporting and Record-Keeping Requirements

Under current procedures, ATF cannot state with certainty how many 50 caliber rifles have been manufactured in the United States. Moreover, the minimum reporting requirements that apply to firearm manufacturers do not even include the reporting of model numbers.

Likewise, information regarding how many of these sniper rifles have been used in crime is sketchy at best. ATF keeps track of how many times local police departments request that such weapons be traced. However, no information regarding the police department requesting the trace or the type of crime with which the weapon was involved is available.

This kind of information is essential to fully assessing the level of threat posed by these weapons. ATF should immediately revamp its reporting standards to require that the manufacturers of sniper rifles report the exact number of such weapons produced each year, including the caliber and model designation and the identity of any person to whom the weapon has been transferred by the manufacturer.

ATF should also enhance the collection, analysis, and dissemination of tracing data related to all sniper rifles. Specifically, ATF should collect and make available to the public information regarding the frequency of the use of such weapons in crime, including the nature of those crimes.

^e 18 U.S.C. 925 (d)(3) requires the Secretary of the Treasury to authorize the importation only of those weapons that are “generally recognized as particularly suitable for or readily adaptable to sporting purposes...”

Use the Civil Justice System to Hold Manufacturers Accountable

Another promising avenue may be recognition that the marketing of sniper rifles presents a classic case, using ordinary “black letter” tort concepts, of an industry’s calculated decision to sell “purpose-designed” and “purpose-built” instruments of war without restraint—in reckless disregard of clearly foreseeable consequences stemming from the intended and advertised use of the product.

Given their acknowledged design purpose, sniper rifles are clearly *qualitatively* different from any other class of firearms. Other firearms sold in the civilian market are at least nominally designed and sold for sporting or supposed self-defense purposes. Sniper rifles, on the other hand, are designed and sold for the express purpose of killing people. Civil courts should be prepared to recognize that difference.

Therefore, a useful strategy for effective control may lie in civil litigation, a strategy that would be enhanced if states passed legislation clearly establishing strict liability for damages resulting from the use or misuse of such weapons. Such litigation could impose tort liability, including punitive damages, for manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors, importers, retailers, and any others who participate in bringing to the civilian market any sniper rifle (in any caliber) or associated gear (such as ammunition or optics) that is used to kill or injure a human being or to damage property.

In short, the gun industry should be held to the strictest standards of legal accountability available for the design and marketing to civilians of military sniper rifles, as detailed in this report.

Ban the Sale of Armor-Piercing Ammunition

Military surplus armor-piercing (AP) and armor-piercing incendiary (API) ammunition for .50 sniper rifles is widely and readily available. Although Congress has banned the manufacture of some armor-piercing ammunition, those restrictions apply only to handgun ammunition. The existing ban on armor-piercing ammunition should be updated and expanded to cover all AP and API ammunition. This would most effectively be accomplished through the promulgation of a performance standard in which ammunition is tested for its ability to *penetrate* bullet-resistant vests, ballistic glass, and armor,^f as opposed to the existing standard based on the bullet’s *content*.

^f The current definition of armor-piercing ammunition is based on the materials employed in the construction of the projectile and the relative weight of the projectile jacket. See 18 U.S.C. § 921 (a)(17)(A) & (B).

Enact Comprehensive Regulation of the Gun Industry

Taken together, these recommendations would significantly reduce the severe and immediate threat that heavy and intermediate civilian sniper rifles pose to public safety and national security. On a broader level, however, this situation highlights the problems stemming from the lack of comprehensive regulation of the firearms industry.

As the gun industry markets each new deadly innovation, public policy typically responds on a reactive, piecemeal basis. This must change if we are to keep up with the industry's consistent ingenuity.

To effectively respond to the threat to public safety posed by weapons such as sniper rifles and assault weapons, the firearms industry must be subject to the same type of regulation that already applies to virtually every other industry in America. The gun industry is currently exempt from even the most basic consumer health and safety laws.

Congress should act on legislation introduced by Senator Robert Torricelli (D-NJ) and Representative Patrick Kennedy (D-RI), the Firearms Safety and Consumer Protection Act. The bill would vest the Department of the Treasury with strong consumer protection authority to regulate the design, manufacture, and distribution of firearms and ammunition. The agency would be empowered to take the steps necessary to protect the public from *unreasonable* risk of injury resulting from the use of firearms or firearm products. The agency would be able to set minimum safety standards for firearms and ammunition, issue recalls, mandate safety warnings and, in extreme circumstances, ban certain models or classes of weapons.

This legislation would end the gun industry's deadly immunity from regulation and permit the Department of the Treasury to respond immediately to new threats to public safety such as sniper rifles.

APPENDIX A: Defining Sniper Rifles

The sniper rifles discussed in this report are “purpose-designed” and “purpose-built.” That is, they are specifically designed and built expressly for true military and police sniping—a very different matter from the usual criminal pot-shot from hiding. In every respect, such weapons are radically different from the typical hunting rifle.

While it is important to emphasize what a sniper rifle is *not*, it is obviously crucial to define what one is. Rather than rely on our own opinion about what rifles available on the civilian market are sniper rifles, we relied principally on the expertise of the gun industry itself, and on the words of gun experts specializing in sniper rifles. Thus, we used two restrictive criteria to identify the sniper rifles described and discussed in this study:

- ***If the firearms industry itself calls a weapon a “sniper” or “counter-sniper” rifle, we took the industry’s word for it.*** If a manufacturer, a book about sniping written by a recognized expert, a trade magazine, or industry advertising calls a given firearm a “sniper” or “counter-sniper” rifle, we consider it to be a sniper rifle.
- ***If the firearms industry calls a weapon by a euphemism such as “tactical rifle,” but the rifle has essentially the same design features and accessories as, or is simply a production derivative of, a recognized sniper rifle, we consider it to be a sniper rifle.*** This criterion is necessary because of the semantic evasion employed by the firearms industry to sell sniper rifles without calling them such.

When using the first test, note that we did not consider the designation of a firearm as a “sniper” or “counter-sniper” rifle relevant unless that judgment was made by a recognized sniper expert. Casual usage of the terminology was insufficient under this criterion.

We used the second test very sparingly—there are probably many more such crypto-sniper rifles than we name. When defining sniper rifles under the second criterion, the entire design of the rifle was considered. Manufacturers and gunsmiths focus on four major groups to achieve the uniform performance essential to a sniper rifle’s precision: the receiver and action, which together constitute the working mechanism by which the gun is loaded and fired; the barrel; the stock; and the sights and mount.¹⁰¹

Several detailed books about sniping and sniper rifles, available on the civilian market, devote a substantial amount of discussion to the details of how these assemblies are especially handled in design and construction.¹⁰² These details are too voluminous to repeat here, but the common thread is to eliminate as much random motion as possible—a part shouldn't move in a sniper rifle unless it has to, and if it must move, it should always move in the same way.

Thus, for example, special attention is given to the “action,” the moving parts that feed the round into the chamber of the barrel, cause it to fire, and extract the empty casing after firing. Most sniper rifles use a “bolt action,” both because the bolt is a rigid piece that, when locked up, gives the entire action more stability, and because semiautomatic actions use more moving parts, with the consequent potential for the introduction of random or inconsistent movement. In recent years, however, a number of semiautomatic sniper rifles, particularly in the heavy and intermediate calibers, have gained favor.

Sniper rifle trigger mechanisms are designed to operate extraordinarily smoothly. They often feature a two-stage action, in which slack is first taken up on the trigger, and then a final crisp pull releases the firing pin when the target is finally acquired. Special firing pins, made of metals such as titanium, are also used. These pins move more quickly and smoothly than conventional firing pins, so that the lag time between release of the trigger and firing of the round, known as “lock time,” is reduced. The fractions of a second gained in firing time helps ensure that the shot the sniper sees is the shot he makes. “You want a very fast lock time so the rifle has no time to move between the instant you pull the trigger and a split second later when it actually fires.”¹⁰³

Care is also lavished on the rifle barrel, which is subject to warping as it heats up (either from firing or ambient conditions), and actually “resonates,” much like a tuning fork, when the rifle is fired and the bullet passes its length. The design objectives are to minimize warping and vibration, and to have the barrel resonate as consistently as possible each time it is fired.

To these ends, sniper rifles often have so-called “bull” or “target” barrels.¹⁰⁴ These barrels are heavier and fatter than the usual sporting rifle barrel. They may be “free-floated,” so that no part of the barrel touches the stock beyond the receiver. Distinguishing sniper rifles from sporting rifles, sniper authority John Plaster notes that some hunting rifle manufacturers free-float all but the last two inches of the forearm tip. “This,” he advises, “may result in acceptable accuracy for hunting, but it is not appropriate for a sniper rifle.”¹⁰⁵ Some thick barrels for sniper rifles are “fluted” (i.e., grooves carved horizontally on the exterior of the barrel) to reduce weight and facilitate cooling while maintaining rigidity.

The end product of these and other fine-tuning features is a precision instrument that is more rugged and more accurate than its hunting cousins, and probably exceeds the capabilities of the person who shoots it. "At the present, sniping rifles are generally so good that they are far more accurate than 99 out of 100 people can shoot them," according to weapons expert Ian V. Hogg.¹⁰⁶

APPENDIX B: Gallery of Sniper Rifles

The following gallery of sniper rifles demonstrates how prolific the gun industry has been in bringing these weapons to the civilian market. Since new sniper rifles are appearing frequently,⁹ it is by no means all-inclusive. Nevertheless, this list provides a robust sample of sniper rifles being designed, manufactured, imported, and sold on the U.S. civilian gun market today.

Heavy and Intermediate Sniping Rifles

A growing trend in both military and civilian sniper rifles is the emergence of “heavy” sniping rifles.¹⁰⁷ These guns are appearing in the older .50 BMG and the more recently developed .338 Lapua Magnum, an intermediate round falling in size and power somewhere between the traditional military 30 calibers and the .50 BMG.

These bigger rounds have two potential applications: anti-personnel sniping at extremely long distances because of their greater reach, and anti-materiel sniping because of their extraordinary power.

“How can anyone exaggerate .50-caliber performance?” asks sniping expert John Plaster, noting that the round was originally developed to destroy tanks during World War I. “Here’s a bullet that even at 1½ miles crashes into a target with more energy than Dirty Harry’s famous .44 Magnum at point-blank. But tremendous energy can hardly be surprising for a cartridge that’s five times larger than a .30-06—indeed, its 750-grain projectile is almost twice that of many elephant gun cartridges.”¹⁰⁸ Lethal hits have been recorded at ranges of up to 3,000 yards with the .50 BMG.¹⁰⁹

But, Plaster counsels, it’s the round’s “tremendous ability to penetrate bunkers and buildings that makes it so deadly... This means you can pulverize enemy positions and induce casualties without necessarily seeing an enemy soldier.”¹¹⁰ According to *Jane’s International Defense Review*, by mid-1994 two American companies alone had supplied 50 caliber sniper rifles to “scout/sniper teams, special-operation forces (SOF), combat engineers, and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) personnel in over two dozen countries.”¹¹¹ These companies actively market the same rifles on the U.S. domestic civilian market.

⁹ A book promoted recently by the Paladin Press, *The Home Workshop .50-Caliber Sniper Rifle*, “teaches you how to make a 50-caliber bolt-action sniper rifle in your home workshop.” *Petersen’s Rifle Shooter* (June 1999), p. 33.

The .338 Lapua Magnum was designed in the late 1980s “as a long-range European military sniping round,” according to Plaster. He advises that its “great speed and heavy weight makes for especially lethal long-range shooting and good penetration against vehicles and aircraft—typical counterterrorist targets—as well as building materials.”¹¹²

The enormous destructive power of these heavy sniper rifles notwithstanding, there has been a virtual explosion in their availability on the civilian market. Here are some of the more prominent rifles, a list that is intended to be representative rather than exhaustive.

ADVANCED WEAPONS TECHNOLOGIES. This Greek company distributed at the 1999 SHOT Show advertising material for its M93 Black Arrow 50 caliber sniper rifle, noting among its “military purposes” the “long range engagement of important live targets.”¹¹³ It is not clear whether any of these firearms have been imported into the United States for the civilian market yet.

ARMALITE, INC. This Illinois company, specializing in military-style semiautomatic assault weapons, announced in 1999 the addition to its product line of the 50 caliber AR-50, a single shot bolt-action rifle “for shooters interested in the challenges of long range shooting.”¹¹⁴

BARRETT FIREARMS MANUFACTURING, INC. (VARIOUS MODELS). Barrett, located in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, markets several models of heavy semiautomatic sniper rifles.

According to sniper expert Hogg, Barrett was the first to introduce a production 50 caliber sniping rifle, in 1983. “There was a good deal of scepticism at the thought of using such a heavy weapon for sniping but, after Barrett pointed out that the object was to wreck several million dollars’ worth of jet aircraft with one or two dollars worth of cartridge, the whole thing began to make sense and the idea spread.”¹¹⁵

Barrett calls its Model 82A1 “heavy firepower for light infantry” and boasts in its promotional brochure that the rifle “allows sophisticated targets to be destroyed or disabled by a single soldier. Armored personnel carriers, radar dishes, communications vehicles, aircraft...are all vulnerable to the quick strike capability of the Barrett 82A1.”¹¹⁶

In January 1998 the company introduced its Model 98 in .338 Lapua Magnum, thus capitalizing on a trend and bringing yet more long-range firepower to the civilian

gun market.

DAKOTA ARMS, INC. Dakota, located in Sturgis, South Dakota, says on its Internet web site that its T-76 longbow tactical engagement rifle in .338 Lapua Magnum "was developed from the ground up at the request of one of the world's more sophisticated governments, seeking a tactical military rifle of unprecedented accuracy, power and flexibility...the Longbow offers range and power vastly superior to .30 tactical rifles, without the weight and bulk of .50 weapons."¹¹⁷ The company advertises that the bolt-action rifle has "an effective range of 1500 meters."¹¹⁸

Dakota Arms regularly advertises the Longbow sniper rifle in consumer gun magazines. Recently, sniper expert Plaster wrote in *Soldier of Fortune* magazine, "On this side of the Atlantic, the most impressive .338 Lapua I've come across is the excellent Dakota Arms Longbow rifle, a purpose-built counter-sniper rifle."¹¹⁹

ERMA. Manufactured by the German Emma-Werke GmbH, Munchen-Dachau, and apparently imported by H&R 1871 of Gardner, Massachusetts, the SR-100 sniper rifle is offered in a variety of calibers including the .338 Lapua Magnum.¹²⁰ According to a 1997 article in *Gun World* magazine, the SR100 in .338 Lapua was promoted for the civilian market at the 1996 SHOT Show.¹²¹

HARRIS GUN WORKS, INC./McMILLAN GUN WORKS, INC. (See also listing under standard service caliber rifles). McMillan Gun Works of Phoenix, developed and marketed several models of sniper rifles from the late 1980s into at least the early 1990s. "Seeing that the market was there," writes Hogg, "in 1986 they introduced a 7.62mm sniping rifle and in 1987 followed it with a 50 caliber weapon known as the M87."¹²² These rifles still appear for sale in the classified ad sections of mass industry publications.¹²³ The company was apparently absorbed by Harris Gun Works, Inc., which now markets a similar line from the same city. Carrying on the tradition of heavy sniping rifles, Harris Gun Works markets several different models of bolt-action 50 caliber sniping rifles. Its most recent catalog announced "2 exciting additions to the 50 Caliber line-up" including the M-95 Ultra-light "designed for a high efficiency of 'hits' providing operational capability at ranges of 2000 meters on hard targets, allowing the engagement of fast moving vehicles, helicopters, etc. with greater portability."¹²⁴ The M87 comes in three variants (single shot, repeating, and folding stock butt) and the M92 is a short stock or "bullpup" configuration.¹²⁵

KNIGHT'S MANUFACTURING COMPANY. Located in Vero Beach, Florida, Knight's manufactures the SR-50 semiautomatic .50 BMG rifle. Its catalog quotes the sniper book *Death From Afar* as stating, "Yes, Sir! The Stoner is exactly what the Corps needs."¹²⁶

L.A.R. MANUFACTURING, INC. This Utah company markets a single shot bolt-action .50 BMG "precision crafted" rifle, the Grizzly 50 Big Boar which, it states, has a "3,000 yards effective range."¹²⁷

McMILLAN BROS. RIFLE CO., INC. (See also listing under standard service caliber sniper rifles). This Phoenix company, which calls itself "the most respected family in the firearms business," markets a variety of sniper rifles. The company's "Tactical 50" bolt-action 50 caliber is a straightforward heavy "tactical" or sniper instrument.

THE ROBAR COMPANIES, INC. (See also listing under standard service caliber sniper rifles). This Arizona company specializes in custom-built rifles and bills itself as "internationally recognized as a world leader in precision sniper weapons."¹²⁸ Robar currently markets two 50 caliber sniper rifles, the RC50 and the RC50-F.

Standard Service Caliber Rifles

The gun industry offers on the civilian market a plethora of military sniper rifles chambered in the civilian equivalent of standard military infantry rounds. Since these calibers are identical to those used in many hunting rifles, it is especially important in some cases to focus on the purpose of the weapon's design and manufacture.

One of the most popular of these is the .308 Winchester round, the civilian equivalent of the 7.62x51mm round, the standard NATO infantry rifle round from the 1950s to the 1980s. In the early 1980s, NATO followed the U.S. lead and adopted the smaller 5.56x45mm round as its standard infantry rifle round. The smaller round, sold as .223 in the civilian market, was developed for use in assault rifles like the M-16. It has never gained acceptance as a sniping round, because it is generally not believed to have adequate striking power over the long ranges at which snipers operate. Sniper expert Plaster explains the consequences:

Beyond any doubt, the .308 Winchester (7.62mm NATO) is the world's most popular military and law enforcement sniping cartridge, and for good reason...I am not aware of a single incident in which a perpetrator

has been hit solidly by a .308 and not been rapidly incapacitated. Indeed, in the great majority of cases, he was instantly incapacitated. Unfortunately, in contrary, I know of several stateside police sniping engagements in which suspects were solidly hit with .223 bullets but went on to kill hostages or police before being incapacitated.¹²⁹

Some imports from Russia and other former Soviet bloc countries are chambered in a 7.62x54R Soviet infantry round. Some manufacturers and importers offer military sniper rifles chambered in other popular commercial rifle rounds like the .243 Winchester. Older military surplus sniper rifles are also available on the civilian market in a variety of civilian calibers. These include, for example, sniper versions of the M1903 Springfield and M-1 Garand, the U.S. Army's standard infantry rifles for the First and Second World Wars respectively, in .30-06.

The following list contains many of the more popular military and police sniper rifles available in the civilian gun market.

ACCURACY INTERNATIONAL. Accuracy International of Portsmouth, England, manufactures a variety of infantry sniping rifles, including standard issue for the British and Swedish Armies, in 7.62x51mm NATO.¹³⁰ For a time, its Model AWP (a later version) was marketed in the United States through Gunsite Training Center, Inc., an Arizona shooting school that offers "precision rifle" courses. Gunsite enthused about the AWP in ads as "not just a modified sporting rifle, the Accuracy International is all-sniper, from concept to finished rifle. Its incredible accuracy requires no special tuning, just a skilled trigger finger. In use worldwide by elite units in 22 countries..."¹³¹ Gunsite no longer handles the Accuracy International line,¹³² but various models of the rifle are offered for sale by private parties in the classified advertising sections of mass marketing publications widely circulated in the United States.¹³³ There is no way of telling how these guns were acquired, but it is clear they are in commerce in the civilian market. Accuracy International also distributed promotional material at the 1999 SHOT Show.¹³⁴

ARNOLD ARMS. The Arnold Arms Company of Arlington, Washington offers two models of its "special purpose rifle," the Neutralizer. The rifles are available in a choice of calibers from .223 to .300 Winchester Magnum. The Mark I is built on Remington or Winchester actions, and the Mark II is built on the company's own "Apollo" action. Range in .308 Winchester is said to be 500 yards, and in .300 Winchester Magnum out to 1,000 yards "plus."

Although the company's brochure and Internet web page list the rifles as "special purpose," the accompanying descriptions and illustrations make clear that they are in fact sniper rifles. "Special situations require special tools and equipment to get the job done right the first time with surgical precision!" boasts Arnold's

copy,¹³⁵ echoing the “One shot, one kill” sniper’s mantra. The company also notes that the rifles are “made to accept all standard military and law enforcement sighting systems” and “meticulously machined and assembled to meet your special needs—day or night, whether in the city, rural or overseas!”¹³⁶ The copy is accompanied by a photograph of a camouflaged shooter aiming over the trunk of a sedan with what appears to be a horizontal police stripe down its length. Moreover, it is difficult to imagine what “special purpose” in a “city” such a weapon could have other than sniping—certainly not hunting or long-range sport shooting.

In any case, whatever cover the company may have hoped to create by using the euphemistic term “special purpose,” all doubt was removed by *American Firearms Industry* magazine, the mouthpiece of the National Association of Federally Licensed Firearms Dealers. The association is “The World’s Largest and Oldest Professional Firearms Retailers Association,” and certainly qualifies as an informed industry observer. The magazine describes the Arnold Arms Mark II as a “sniper rifle” in a review found in the “Hot Products Network” section of its Internet web site.¹³⁷

AUTAUGA ARMS. This Alabama-based company specializes in custom-building what it calls “precision rifles.”¹³⁸ It sponsors an annual “Super Sniper Shootout,” a competition among “active certified police, SWAT, government or private agencies...to determine the world’s best sniper team.”¹³⁹

CHANDLER SNIPER RIFLE. Made by Iron Brigade Armory, Ltd. of Jacksonville, North Carolina, the Chandler Sniper Rifle was recently praised by *Soldier of Fortune* as “the very best military/law-enforcement long range sniper rifle in the world, bar none.” The magazine assessed the bolt-action rifle, built on a modified Remington 700 action and chambered in .308 Winchester, as “a genuine 1,000-yard rifle built to exceed USMC specifications.”¹⁴⁰ The rifle’s designer, Lt. Col. Norman A. Chandler, USMC (Ret.) is the same Norm Chandler described in the Lau book (quoted earlier) as having been “hassled” at the SHOT Show for displaying his rifle and *Death From Afar* books (co-authored by his brother, Roy F. Chandler).¹⁴¹

DRAGUNOV SVD AND SVDS (VARIOUS MODELS). An exception to the rule favoring bolt actions for sniper rifles, the Dragunov SVD is a semiautomatic sniper rifle. Development of this Soviet infantry weapon began in 1958. Although the Dragunov SVD is generally based on the same mechanism as the Kalishnikov rifles (e.g., the AK-47 assault rifle), major modifications were made along the way, including shortening the stroke of the gas-driven piston which operates the mechanism to reduce jarring. The final design was chambered for an older, powerful long-range cartridge, the 7.62X54R, and entered Soviet military service in 1963.¹⁴² The Dragunov was subsequently deployed in the armies of most of the Soviet bloc countries and has been used in conflicts wherever Soviet arms were an influence.¹⁴³

Current production of the Dragunov continues at the IZHMASH Joint Stock Company in Izhevsk, Russia. The company's Internet web site states "the Dragunov sniper's rifle excels in engaging fleeting, moving, open and masked single targets."¹⁴⁴ The SVDS is a variant with a folding stock and other features that make it more compact and thus better suited for use by paratroopers and tank crews.¹⁴⁵

Several other countries have produced Dragunov-style sniper rifles, including Romania, Yugoslavia, and China North Industries (Norinco), an arsenal of the People's Republic of China.¹⁴⁶ Norinco's sniper rifle, recently imported into the United States by Brolin Industries of Pomona, California, is available in .308 Winchester, and was described in a recent *Soldier of Fortune* review as "a well-built example of one of the most famous sniper weapons systems of the Cold War."¹⁴⁷ Gibbs Rifle Company of Martinsburg, West Virginia, imported an earlier Chinese version of the Dragunov in 7.62x54, which it called an "exact copy" and "as well made as its Russian counterpart."¹⁴⁸

Norinco's sniper rifle and numerous other Dragunov variants are regularly advertised in widely circulated gun industry publications and openly available on the U.S. civilian market.¹⁴⁹

GARAND (M1C, M1D). The M1 semiautomatic rifle, chambered in .30-06, was the U.S. military force's standard infantry battle rifle throughout the Second World War and the Korean War. Two sniper versions, the M1C and the M1D, were issued.¹⁵⁰

Surplus M1 rifles have been fairly common on the U.S. civilian market in years past, are still offered in classified ad gun publications, and can be found at gun shows. More recently, however, completely reconditioned versions of the M1D sniper rifles have been offered through Miltech, Inc. of Los Altos, California. The company's advertisement in *American Rifleman*, the NRA's official magazine, offers "the M1-D Garand Sniper Rifle hand restored to original issue condition."¹⁵¹ In an earlier article (conveniently published just one month before Miltech's ad appeared), the NRA magazine described the company's reconditioning process, which includes "thoroughly cleaning and reconditioning the guns" and "repla[cing] any missing, damaged, defective or incorrect parts."¹⁵² Another source of new condition M1 sniper rifles for civilians is through the Civilian Marksmanship Program according to a question and answer published recently in the NRA magazine.¹⁵³

In short, these military sniper rifles are currently sold not only as old surplus in variable condition, but in new condition on the U.S. civilian firearms market.

HARRIS GUN WORKS, INC./McMILLAN GUN WORKS, INC. (See also listing under heavy and intermediate sniper rifles). McMillan Gun Works should not be confused with McMillan Bros. Rifles (see listing below), also of Phoenix, although there is apparently a common family line.¹⁵⁴

McMillan Gun Works sniper rifles, available in .30-06 and a variety of other calibers, have included the Model 86 (or M-86) Sniper Rifle, introduced in 1986 and described by the company as “a sniper weapon for tactical deployment at extended ranges,”¹⁵⁵ the Model 89 (M-89) Sniper Rifle, introduced in 1990 and said to be an improved version of the M-86,¹⁵⁶ and the M-40, based on a Remington action.¹⁵⁷ Plaster says U.S. Navy SEALs use the M-86, which “led the way for a whole field of .308 sniper rifles in the 1980s.”¹⁵⁸

McMILLAN BROS. RIFLE CO., INC. (See also listing under heavy and intermediate sniper rifles). McMillan Bros. entries in the standard caliber “tactical,” or sniper, market are the MCRT and MCR, which apparently differ in that the former is based on an in-house action while the latter is based on a Remington Model 700 action.¹⁵⁹ The rifles are chambered in .308 Winchester, although other calibers are available.

PARKER-HALE/GIBBS. Parker-Hale, an English manufacturer, produced several models of bolt-action sniping rifles in 7.62x51mm NATO for the British armed services. According to Hogg, the Gibbs Rifle Company of Martinsburg, West Virginia, reported by him to be a subsidiary of Navy Arms, bought the name and design of the latest model, M-85, from Parker-Hale in 1990 and began to manufacture and sell it in the United States.¹⁶⁰ Although it is not clear whether Gibbs is currently producing the Parker-Hale line, the company carried the “M-85 Sniper System” in its catalog for a time, and stated that it would “continue to produce the full line of Parker-Hale” rifles.¹⁶¹ Gilbert calls the Parker-Hale Model 85 a “first-rate sniper rifle.”¹⁶²

REMINGTON. The Remington Model 77 (Varmint) is described by sniping expert Lau as an example of a “politically correct” variant of a sniper rifle.

Remington introduced its Model 700 line in 1962, and the basic bolt-action rifle is still offered today in a variety of calibers and configurations.¹⁶³

At about the same time that the Model 700 was introduced, the U.S. Marine Corps was looking for a new sniper rifle to replace the Winchester Model 70. After trials in 1965, the Marine Corps selected the Model 700 as the basic new sniper rifle,

with custom features—including a “varmint” weight barrel—manufactured and assembled at Remington’s Custom Shop at Ilion, New York. The rifle entered Marine Corps service in 1966 as the M40, and later in an improved version, the M40A1.¹⁶⁴ In the late 1980s the U.S. Army also selected a Model 700 variant, with a special rifling and trigger system, as its standard issue sniper rifle, which entered service as the M24 Sniper Weapon System.¹⁶⁵

In addition to these military sniper models, Remington offers Model 700 Police and Varmint rifles using essentially the same actions and barrel as the military sniper versions.¹⁶⁶ In fact, Remington emphasizes the military features in its advertising for both the police model *and for the civilian “varmint” model*. In its 1998 law enforcement catalog, Remington states that “the heart of Remington’s law enforcement rifles is the legendary Model 700 action. This is the same action that is at the core of the advanced M-24 Sniper Weapon System we built for the U.S. Army.”¹⁶⁷ In its 1998 commercial catalog, and on its Internet web site, the company boasts that the Model 700 VS, its varmint version, “incorporates the technology of police and military rifle design.”¹⁶⁸

As already noted, the virtual identity of these sniper rifles has not escaped experts such as Lau. Remington’s Model 700 “is undoubtedly the most popular bolt-action sniper rifle in the United States,” according to expert Plaster. “Whether encountered as a Varmint Special, Police Special, USMC M40A1, or Army M24, the Remington has proven itself a dependable and very accurate rifle.”¹⁶⁹

Given the virtual identity of the core systems, the outright equivalence accorded the sniper and varmint model by the experts, and Remington’s own emphasis on the inclusion of military and police technology in its advertising, we include the Remington Model 700 Varmint Special on this list of civilian sniper rifles.

THE ROBAR COMPANIES, INC. A contender for *Guns & Ammo* magazine’s “gun of the year,”¹⁷⁰ the Robar QR2F made a splash this year in the popular gun press, clearly marking the emergence of the sniper rifle niche as a leader in the civilian mass market. *Gun World* praised the rifle, built on a Remington 700 action, as “a unique and exemplary example of the new breed of super-accurate bolt-action centerfire precision rifles that are now becoming more and more common on America’s firing lines. Yet, the QR2-F is a highly accurate sniper rifle that comes with a folding stock.”¹⁷¹ *Guns & Ammo* saw the rifle as demonstrating that “many of the most intriguing items in the tactical rifle field are being offered by smaller companies,” as opposed to “major companies like Remington and Winchester.”¹⁷² (The variety of companies listed in this gallery confirms that observation).

SAKO (See also listing under heavy and intermediate sniper rifles). Sako, a Finnish company, manufactures several models of military sniper rifles. Its TRG 21 sniper rifle is ambiguously referred to in the company's literature for the civilian market as a "sharpshooting system."¹⁷³ The same rifle, however, is listed in at least three expert publications as a sniper rifle.¹⁷⁴ John Plaster praises it as providing "the best out-of-the-box, untuned performance I've ever had from a sniper-grade weapon..."¹⁷⁵ Moreover, the company's literature describes the TRG 21 rifle's genesis as a "challenge by the Finnish government to create 'the world's most accurate sharpshooter's rifle.'"¹⁷⁶

SAVAGE ARMS. Savage presents its Model 110 FP "tactical rifle" in its catalog and advertising as "designed for the 'TACTICAL' specialist who demands pin-point accuracy in a high power rifle...flawless in critical use situations."¹⁷⁷ The rifle features a heavy barrel, and its receiver is drilled and tapped for mounting telescopic sights; it is available in a range of calibers from .223 Remington to .300 Winchester Magnum.¹⁷⁸ Direct evidence of consumer acceptance of this "tactical" rifle as a "sniper rifle" is found in a letter to the editor published in *Fighting Firearms* in which the correspondent reported that he had "bought a Savage 110FP bolt-action sniper rifle in caliber .223 Remington..."¹⁷⁹ Writing in *Soldier of Fortune* about sniping trends, Plaster called this rifle "the best buy on the American market."¹⁸⁰

SIGARMS. The Swiss company SIG (Schweizerische Industrie Gesellschaft) has been making rifles for the Swiss army since the middle of the last century, and has been making specialized sniping rifles since the 1970s, most in 7.62x51mm NATO, but one (the SSG 550) in 5.56x45mm.¹⁸¹ These rifles are highly regarded in the sniping community, and in the past at least some have been imported into this country for civilian sale.¹⁸² SIG products are imported through its U.S. subsidiary, SIG Arms, Inc. of Exeter, New Hampshire.

The company's 1998 new products catalog features a new "tactical" rifle in .308 Winchester, the R93 Tactical. The rifle is available for sale to civilians, according to the customer service department at SIG Arms.¹⁸³ Other SIG sniper rifles may also be available in the civilian market in this country.

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY. The Springfield Armory of Geneseo, Illinois, manufactures and sells a variety of rifles that are essentially copies of classic modern military firearms, such as the M-14. It owns the name Springfield Armory, but is not the actual successor of the government arsenal by the same name that produced military weapons for almost two centuries in Massachusetts.

The company makes no bones about the sniper rifle nature of the semiautomatic SAR-8 Heavy Barrel Counter Sniper Rifle featured in its 1998 catalog.¹⁸⁴ Springfield's promotional literature boasts that the rifle, chambered in .308 Winchester, is "modeled after" the Heckler and Koch PSG-1 sniper rifle, but at 1/5th the price.¹⁸⁵ Plaster calls its PSG-1 "the finest semiauto sniper rifle in the world" and "the most expensive" at over \$10,000 a copy.¹⁸⁶

The company distributes similar promotional material for the IDF (Israeli Defense Force) M14 sniper rifle. "The M14 was selected by the IDF as its sniper rifle due to the rifle's inherent long range accuracy."¹⁸⁷

TEXAS BRIGADE ARMORY. This custom gun shop, operated by expert Lau,¹⁸⁸ produces a variety of custom sniper rifles, including what it describes on its web site as "a true copy of the rifle currently being used by Marine Corps scout snipers."¹⁸⁹ Lau discusses in detail the process and features involved in the shop's production of various civilian sniper rifle models.¹⁹⁰

NOTES

1. Tom Diaz, *Making A Killing: The Business of Guns in America* (New Press, New York, 1999). The gun industry's virtually unchecked efforts to increase lethality are charted throughout this book.
2. See, e.g. "A tale of two fifties; 0.50-calibre sniper rifles gain popularity," *International Defense Review* (June 1, 1994), p. 67.
3. "A tale of two fifties," p. 67.
4. "A tale of two fifties," p. 67.
5. John L. Plaster, *The Ultimate Sniper: An Advanced Training Manual for Military & Police Snipers* (Paladin Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1993), p. 215.
6. "Weapons for the one shot kill," *Jane's Defence Weekly* (August 21, 1993), p. 24. For another example of the use of these terms, see, "Spring '94 long gun review," *Shooting Industry* (May 1994), p. 36 ("...the AWP is a purpose-built sniper rifle...").
7. Plaster, p. 33.
8. Adrian Gilbert, *Sniper: The Skills, the Weapons, and the Experiences* (St. Martin's Paperbacks, New York, 1996), p. 259.
9. See, e.g.: "Sniper Country: One Shot—One Kill," at www.snipercountry.com.
10. Frank W. James, "The ROBAR QR2-F," *Gun World* (September 1998), p. 22.
11. See, e.g.: "Sniper Schools Growing Rapidly," CBS News Transcripts (March 15, 1999).
12. Mike R. Lau, *The Military and Police Sniper: Advanced Precision Shooting for Combat and Law Enforcement* (Precision Shooting, Inc., Manchester, CT, June 1998), p. 97. Lau's book was reviewed by a leading gun industry newspaper, *The New Gun Week*, and praised as "authoritative" and a potential "Bible" for military and police snipers. "A Valuable Book for Shooters Wanting Long-Range Accuracy," *The New Gun Week* (October 1, 1998), p. 13.
13. "Weapons for the one shot kill," p. 24.
14. "More choice than ever for the sniper of the 1990s," *International Defense Review* (July 1, 1990), p. 765.

15. "Pinpoint precision: rifle accuracy," *Sports Afield* (November 1998), p. 64. ("How far do I expect to shoot when hunting? Start with an honest assessment and you'll realize that almost any functional rifle—one that will plunk bullets within a four-inch circle at 150 yards and less—will do the job. Most deer, after all, are taken at that distance and under."). See also Plaster, p.13.
16. Plaster, p. 13.
17. "Sniper—maximum havoc for minimum expenditure," *International Defense Review* (December 1, 1993), p. 945.
18. "Killer Competition or How Real Snipers Spend the Weekends," *Wall Street Journal* (May 18, 1998), p. A1.
19. "The range-to-target distance of these [police] positions varies, but in an urban environment is normally less than one hundred yards. This differs dramatically from military snipers, who often shoot at ranges in excess of five hundred yards." Craig Roberts, *Police Sniper* (Pocket Books, New York, 1993), pp. xxv-xxvi (Introduction by Gunnery Sergeant Carlos N. Hathcock II, USMC, Ret.). The police sniper "desires to be closer than 100 yards," but the military sniper desires to use the longer range of his weapon to his advantage, "meaning the sniper rifle has better accuracy and lethality than the enemy's assault rifles when the sniper is more than 400 yards away." The antipersonnel range of the 50 caliber is 2,700 yards. Plaster, pp. 13, 215.
20. Plaster, p. 13.
21. Plaster, p. 14.
22. Ian V. Hogg, *The World's Sniping Rifles* (Stackpole Books, Pennsylvania, 1998), p. 123; "Semi-Automatic Browning .50," *Guns & Ammo* (January 1998), pp. 40-41.
23. Barrett Firearms Manufacturing, Inc. promotional brochure, in files of the Violence Policy Center.
24. "Improved sniper/counter-sniper rifle," *International Defense Review* (January 1, 1997), p. 19.
25. "More choice than ever for the sniper," p. 765.
26. "More choice than ever for the sniper," p. 765.
27. Barrett Firearms Manufacturing, Inc. advertising brochure in files of the Violence Policy Center.

28. "A tale of two fifties," p. 67 ("The Barrett can fire 11 rounds per minute, and under some circumstances may be capable of as many hits as an M2HB machinegun"); "Sniper rifles—maximum havoc," p. 945 ("with an accurate rate of fire of 10/rounds/min...").
29. "Combat Weaponcraft: Semiauto Snipers," *Soldier of Fortune* (May 1998), p. 29.
30. "Body armor races to keep up as guns get nastier," *Reuters North American Wire* (April 2, 1995). The National Institute of Justice Standard for the Ballistic Resistance of Police Body Armor establishes seven levels of protection, in ascending order of the armor's ability to resist penetration: Types I, II-A, II, III-A, III, IV, and "Special Type." Levels used for routine full-time patrol wear are Types I, II-A and II. "Type III-A, which will provide protection from 9mm submachine guns and 44 Magnum handguns...and types III and IV, which will protect against high-powered rifles, are normally considered to be special purpose armor most appropriate for use during tactical operations." U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, *Ballistic Resistance of Police Body Armor: NIJ Standard 0101.03* (April 1987), Section 2, "Classification." Thus, most police officers will not be wearing Type III-A (submachine gun protection), much less Type IV, which protects against some armor-piercing rifle rounds—but not .338 Lapua Magnum or .50 BMG rounds.
31. "The Model 82 is capable of 'decommissioning' materiel such as radar vans, containerized electrical generators, surface-air missiles, light armored vehicles and parked aircraft at ranges well beyond hostile small arms fire." "Sniper rifles—maximum havoc," p. 945.
32. "A Hostage's Last Hope," *Sun-Sentinel* (Ft. Lauderdale, Florida) (February 16, 1997), p. 1B.
33. Charlton Heston, "From the Capitol," *Guns & Ammo* (September 1998), p. 16.
34. *That Was Then, This Is Now: The NRA and the Gun Industry Talk About Assault Weapons—From Both Sides of Their Mouth*, Violence Policy Center, December 1997.
35. Lau, p. 72.
36. "SIG SG550 Sniper," *The Small Arms Review* (Sept. 1998), p. 24.
37. "Precision on the Prairie: Grad School for Snipers," *Soldier of Fortune* (May, 1998), p. 33 (italics in original).

38. "Tactical Marksman," *Guns & Weapons for Law Enforcement* (July 1997), p. 74.
39. "Sniper rifles: maximum havoc," p. 945.
40. "Military's massive .50-caliber goes great guns with civilians," *The Orange County Register* (March 30, 1997), p. A13.
41. Philip J. Cook and Jens Ludwig, *Guns In America: Results of a Comprehensive National Survey on Firearms Ownership and Use*, Police Foundation, 1996, pp.13-14.
42. Lucian K. Truscott 4th, "A 'Right' to Bear 50 Assault Weapons?," *The New York Times* (April 7, 1998), op-ed page.
43. "The trend towards 'Species Select' guns: New profits?" *Shooting Sports Retailer* (May/June 1998), p. 8.
44. For more on the use of increasing lethality as a marketing tool, see Diaz, *Making A Killing*.
45. "Dragunov: The Man Behind the Rifle," *Soldier of Fortune* (December 1996), p. 36, 38-39; Ian Hogg, *Jane's Gun Recognition Guide* (HarperCollins 1996), p. 366; Gilbert, p. 262.
46. Gilbert, *Sniper*, p. 262.
47. "A Mini-Sniper With Style," *Guns & Ammo* (April 1998), p. 33.
48. "Sniper rifles—maximum havoc," p. 945.
49. Barrett Firearms Manufacturing, Inc. advertising brochure in files of the Violence Policy Center.
50. See, e.g., ".50 Times Four," *Guns & Ammo* (September 1998), pp. 62-64.
51. Mike R. Lau, *The Military and Police Sniper: Advanced Precision Shooting for Combat and Law Enforcement* (Precision Shooting, Inc., Manchester, CT, June 1998), p. 71.
52. Lucian K. Truscott 4th, "A 'Right' to Bear 50 Assault Weapons?."
53. Advertisement for Military Book Club, *Guns & Ammo* (November 1995), p. 11.

54. Charles Henderson, *Marine Sniper: 93 Confirmed Kills* (Berkley Book, New York 1986), p. 128.
55. Lau, p. 97.
56. For a more detailed discussion of the gun press and its relation to the industry see Diaz, *Making a Killing*, pp. 51-60.
57. "Gun Gods or Guileless Gurus," *Shooting Sports Retailer* (January 1999), p. 50.
58. See, e.g., ".50 Times Four," p. 62; "Surgical Precision: An Exclusive Visit to the U.S. Army's Sniper School Yields an Inside Look at the Latest Rifles, Ammo, Optics and Tactics," *Guns & Ammo* (March 1997), p. 62; "Sniping in a Winter Wonderland," *Soldier of Fortune* (May 1997), p. 18; "Leathernecks and Lawmen: Long-Range Mountain Shoot-Off," *Soldier of Fortune* (July 1996), p. 34; "Snipercraft," *Soldier of Fortune* (June 1995), p. 58.
59. See, e.g., James, "The Robar QR2-F," p. 18; "A Mini-Sniper with Style: Robar's QR2F Blends Power and Precision in a Compact Package," *Guns & Ammo* (April 1998), p. 32; "Erma SR 100 Sniper Rifle: .338 Lapua Magnum Is The Missing Link," *Gun World* (February 1997), p. 68; "Norinco's NATO Sniper: Dragunov's Mass-Produced SVD Sharpshooter," *Soldier of Fortune* (June 1998), p. 58. See also "Sniping 2000: New Rules of Engagement for Precision Shooting," *Soldier of Fortune* (April 1998), p. 52 for a general review of developments in sniping rifles, most of which are available on the civilian market.
60. From editorial introducing the magazine, *Tactical Shooter* (January 1998), p. 3. ("...a new publication devoted solely to tactical shooting) (ellipses in original).
61. "Erma SR 100 Sniper Rifle," pp. 68-69.
62. See, e.g., review of Ian V. Hogg, *The World's Sniping Rifles* (Paladin Press) in *Gun Week* (October 1, 1998), p.13.
63. See, e.g., ads in *American Rifleman* (August 1998), p. 7 (three books on sniping); *American Survival Guide* (October 1998), p. 5 (book on sniper camouflage); *Handguns* (November 1998) (six books on sniping), pp. 16-17.
64. See, e.g., Delta Press Ltd. catalog, vol. 42, pp. 28-29.
65. In addition to the commercial sites, see, e.g. "The Sniper Country Bookstore" at www.snipercountry.com.
66. Adrian Gilbert, St. Martin's Press (New York 1997).

67. Adrian Gilbert, St. Martin's Paperbacks (New York 1994).
68. Charles Henderson, Berkley Books (New York 1986).
69. Craig Roberts, Pocket Books (New York 1993).
70. Ian V. Hogg, Stackpole Books (Pennsylvania 1998).
71. Duncan Long, Paladin Press (Boulder, Colorado 1988).
72. Dan Boone, Desert Publications (El Dorado, Arkansas 1995).
73. John L. Plaster, Paladin Press (Boulder, Colorado 1993).
74. Mike R. Lau, Precision Shooting Inc. (Manchester, Connecticut 1998).
75. Anonymous, Paladin Press (Boulder, Colorado 1992).
76. Anonymous, Desert Publications (El Dorado, Arkansas 1994).
77. Thomas Koch, Desert Publications (El Dorado, Arkansas 1996), p. iii.
78. Anonymous, Desert Publications (El Dorado, Arkansas 1982).
79. Anonymous, Delta Press (El Dorado, Arkansas 1978).
80. Anonymous, *Defending Your Retreat: A Manual for Combat After the Collapse* (2d ed., 4th printing) (Delta Press, 1978), p. 2.
81. See, e.g., Delta Press catalog Volume 42-43, p. 28, offering four different sniper videos.
82. Ultimate Weapons System web site at www.uws.com.
83. Ultimate Weapons System web site.
84. "Head Games Delivers Realistic Shooting Action to the PC With Remington Top Shot," *PR Newswire* (October 26, 1998).
85. "Sniper Schools Growing Rapidly," CBS News Transcripts (March 15, 1999).
86. "Pain & Gain At Thunder Ranch: Hardcore Tactics and Training," *Soldier of Fortune* (March 1997), p. 49 ("Precision Rifle 1: The new, politically correct title for the course previously called Countersniper 1"), p. 51 ("There were 15 students in this course, of which about half were law-enforcement personnel...").

87. "An Arizona Training Center Hits The Bull's-Eye for Gun Enthusiasts," *The Washington Post* (February 23, 1997), p. E1. ("Gunsite's classes range from the most basic, the one I took, to sniper training.").
88. "Killer Competition or How Real Snipers Spend the Weekends," *The Wall Street Journal* (May 18, 1998), p. A1 ("Bob Gainer, 35, and an accountant from Silver Spring, Md., has never competed before.")
89. "Carlos Hathcock, Marine Sniper," Paladin Press (Boulder, Colorado) 1993.
90. See, e.g., "Reach Out and Help Someone: Carlos Hathcock Sniper Match," *Soldier of Fortune* (August 1998), p. 48; "One Shot, One Kill—One Ticket, Two Bills," *Soldier of Fortune* (November 1995), p. 60.
91. "A Tribute to Carlos Hathcock," downloaded from Mel's sniper page (www.imt.net/~mele/index.html), April 28, 1999.
92. "93 Kills, 0 Awards," *Soldier of Fortune* (May 1995), p. 3.
93. John A. Kolman, "A Selective Analysis of Operation Trojan Horse Conducted by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms," *Report of the Department of the Treasury on the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Investigation of Vernon Wayne Howell, Also Known as David Koresh*, U.S. Government Printing Office, September 1993, p. B-52.
94. For a discussion of the penetrative power of the 7.62mm NATO sniper round, see "Combat Weaponcraft: The 7.62 NATO denies cover," *Soldier of Fortune* (September 1998), pp. 31 and 72, recounting among other things the exploits of a U.S. Army 1st Cavalry Division sniper in Vietnam who "recorded confirmed kills by engaging enemy soldiers using a tree for cover and simply firing through the tree." The author opines that in the vicinity of his own small farm "there is nothing that would supply cover from a 7.62mm NATO weapon except three boulders and the engine block of any motor vehicles within the area."
95. *Report to the Deputy Attorney General on the Events at Waco, Texas: February 28 to April 19, 1993*, U.S. Department of Justice, October 8, 1993, p. 309.
96. *Report of the Department of the Treasury on the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Investigation of Vernon Wayne Howell, Also Known as David Koresh*, U.S. Department of the Treasury, September 1993, pp. 26, 53, 101-104.
97. U.S. Department of Justice press release, "Seven Cuban-Americans Charged With Conspiracy to Murder Fidel Castro" (August 25, 1998); *United States v. Angel Manuel Alfonso et al.* (Criminal No. 97-247(HL)), U.S. District Ct. (Puerto

Rico), superceding indictment (August 25, 1998); "7 Indicted in Plot to Kill Castro; CANF Official Named in Grand Jury Probe," *The Miami Herald* (August 26, 1998), p. 1A; "Exile Group's Officials Facing Indictment in Anti-Castro Plot," *The Miami Herald* (August 21, 1998), p. 1A.

98. "Uncovering the Irish Republican Army," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (August 1, 1996), p. 343.

99. "Sniper unit equipped with deadliest rifle ever made," *The Irish Times* (March 20, 1999).

100. Thomas Koch, *The Militia Battle Manual* (Desert Publications, 1996), p. iii.

101. Gilbert, *Sniper*, p. 259.

102. See, e.g., Plaster, Chapter II; Lau, Chapter 4; Gilbert, Chapter 15.

103. Plaster, p. 34.

104. See "More choice than ever for the sniper," p. 765 ("The target barrel is significant, since it represents a notable change in thinking" from earlier sniper rifles, which were often simply selected service rifles to which a telescopic sight had been attached).

105. Plaster, p. 43.

106. Hogg, *The World's Sniping Rifles*, p. 13.

107. See Plaster, pp. 215-30, "Sniping 2000," p. 52.

108. Plaster, p. 215.

109. Plaster, p. 215.

110. Plaster, p. 222.

111. "A tale of two fifties," p. 67.

112. Plaster, pp. 226-27.

113. Advanced Weapons Technologies promotional brochure obtained at the 1999 SHOT Show and in the files of the Violence Policy Center.

114. Page downloaded from Armalite, Inc. Web site on April 29, 1999; cover of *Shooting Industry* (April 1999).

115. Hogg, *The World's Sniping Rifles*, p. 108.

116. Barrett Firearms Manufacturing, Inc. promotional brochure, in files of the Violence Policy Center.
117. "Dakota Tactical Engagement Rifle," page downloaded from Dakota Arms, Inc. Internet web site, November 9, 1998.
118. Dakota Arms, Inc. advertisement in *Soldier of Fortune* (December 1997), p. 27.
119. "Sniping 2000," pp. 52, 54.
120. Walter, p. 173.
121. "ERMA SR100 Sniper Rifle," p. 68, 69.
122. Hogg, *The World's Sniping Rifles*, p. 104.
123. See, e.g., classified ad for McMillan (Harris) M-95, *Gun List* (Sept. 18, 1998), p. 122.
124. Harris Gunworks catalog obtained at 1999 SHOT Show and in the files of the Violence Policy Center.
125. Harris Gunworks catalog and "Harris .50 BMG Rifles," *Machine Gun News* (October 1996), p. 28; see also, Hogg, *The World's Sniping Rifles*, 104-107.
126. Knight's Manufacturing Co. 1999 Product Catalog, inside back cover, in files of the Violence Policy Center.
127. L.A.R. Manufacturing, Inc. promotional material in files of Violence Policy Center and promotion on Web site downloaded on April 29, 1999.
128. The Robar Companies, Inc. catalog, obtained at 1999 SHOT Show and in the files of the Violence Policy Center, p. 10.
129. Plaster, p. 115-16.
130. Hogg, *The World's Sniping Rifles*, pp. 84-91; Gilbert, *Sniper* pp. 281-83.
131. Gunsite Training Center, Inc. advertisement in *Guns & Weapons for Law Enforcement* (July, 1997), p. 73.
132. Telephone conversation with Gunsite staff person, Nov. 9, 1998.
133. See, e.g., ads for Models AWP and Super Magnum in *Gun List* (Sept. 18, 1998), p. 95.

134. "Precision Rifles for Sport & Competition," Accuracy International brochure obtained at 1999 SHOT Show and in files of the Violence Policy Center.
135. Arnold Arms Co., Inc. 1998 catalog, p. 13 (in files of the Violence Policy Center); page downloaded from product reviews on company's Internet web site (November 8, 1998).
136. Arnold Arms Co., Inc. 1998 catalog, p. 13 (in files of the Violence Policy Center); page downloaded from product reviews on company's Internet web site (November 8, 1998).
137. "Hot Products Network" description downloaded from *American Firearms Industry* web site (September 16, 1998); description of NAFLFD downloaded from same web site (November 8, 1998).
138. Autauga Arms, Inc. advertisement, *Soldier of Fortune* (May 1998), p. 72.
139. "Super Sniper Shootout," two pages downloaded from Autauga Arms Internet web site (November 9, 1998).
140. "As Far As You Can See: The 1,000 Yard Chandler Rifle," *Soldier of Fortune* (May 1998), p. 36.
141. "As Far As You Can See", p. 64; the books are reviewed in "Required Reading," *Fighting Firearms* (Fall 1995), pp. 26-27.
142. Hogg, *The World's Sniping Rifles*, pp. 66-67. For a history of the development of the Dragunov sniper rifle, see "Dragunov: The Man Behind the Rifle," *Soldier of Fortune* (December 1996), p. 39.
143. John Walter, *Rifles of the World (2d Ed.)* (Krause Publications, Iola, Wisconsin, 1998), p. 471.
144. Second of three pages describing the "7.62mm Dragunov Sniper's Rifle, SVD," from Izhmash Internet web site (June 16, 1998).
145. Second of three pages describing the "7.62mm Dragunov Sniper's Rifle with folding butt, SVDS," from Izhmash Internet web site (June 16, 1998).
146. "Norinco's NATO Sniper: Dragunov's Mass-produced SVD Sharpshooter," *Soldier of Fortune* (June, 1998), pp. 59-60.
147. "Norinco's NATO Sniper," p. 66.
148. Gibbs Rifle Company catalog in files of the Violence Policy Center.

149. See, e.g., Classic Arms advertisement in *Gun List* (Sept. 18, 1998), p. 106 ("Romanian 'Romak-3' Dragunov Sniper Rifle"; "Pre Ban .308 Chinese Dragunov NDM86 Sniper Rifle"); CFI advertisement in *Shotgun News* (2d Issue of September, 1998), p. 33 ("Norinco SVD"; "Russian SVD").
150. Walter, p. 339; Gilbert, *Sniper*, p. 284.
151. Miltech advertisement, *American Rifleman* (February 1998), p. 23.
152. "Vintage Service Rifles," *American Rifleman* (January 1998), p. 24.
153. "Weaver K-4 Scopes on M1D Garand," *American Rifleman* (August 1998), p. 22.
154. Telephone conversation with McMillan Bros. Rifle Co., Inc. employee, November 9, 1998.
155. McMillan Gunworks catalog in files of the Violence Policy Center.
156. Walter, p. 360.
157. McMillan Gunworks catalog in files of the Violence Policy Center.
158. Plaster, p. 35.
159. "Tactical" rifle page downloaded from McMillan Internet web site (June 16, 1998).
160. Hogg, *The World's Sniping Rifles*, pp. 92-95; see also Plaster, who says the rifle is "now made in the United States by Navy Arms." Plaster, p. 40.
161. Undated Gibbs Rifle Company catalog in files of the Violence Policy Center (probably 1993).
162. Gilbert, *Sniper*, p. 281.
163. Hogg, *The World's Sniping Rifles*, p. 100.
164. Gilbert, *Sniper*, 285-86; Hogg, *The World's Sniping Rifles*, pp. 100-101; Lau, p. 2; Plaster, p. 35.
165. Lau, pp.20-23; Hogg, *The World's Sniping Rifles*, pp. 98-99.
166. Lau, p. 2.
167. Remington 1998 law enforcement catalog, p.8, in files of the Violence Policy Center.

168. 1998 *Remington Country* catalog, p. 22, in files of the Violence Policy Center; description downloaded from Remington Internet web site (November 5, 1998); the same language is found in a Remington catalog published as an advertising insert in a popular gun magazine, *Gun World* (April, 1997).
169. Plaster, p. 35.
170. "Gun of the Year," *Guns & Ammo* (August 1998), pp. 68-69.
171. James, "The ROBAR QR2-F," pp. 18-20.
172. "A Mini-Sniper With Style," *Guns & Ammo* (April 1998), p. 33.
173. Sako rifle catalog in files of Violence Policy Center.
174. Walter, p. 130; Hogg, *The World's Sniping Rifles*, p. 23; Gilbert, p. 265.
175. Plaster, p. 36.
176. Sako rifle catalog in files of the Violence Policy Center.
177. Savage Arms 1998 catalog, p. 14, in files of the Violence Policy Center; Savage Arms ads in *American Rifleman* (October 1996), p. 29 and *Guns & Ammo* (October 1996), p. 34.
178. Savage Arms 1998 catalog, p. 14, in files of the Violence Policy Center; Savage Arms ads in *American Rifleman* (October 1996), p. 29 and *Guns & Ammo* (October 1996), p. 34.
179. "Snipers Get What They Pay For," letter to the editor from Stephen Nadeau, *Fighting Firearms* (Fall, 1995), p. 23. The publication's response was that the Savage rifle was adequate for police use, but not comparable to the more expensive "rigs used by armed professionals" for longer-range work. This is not a material distinction in terms of civilian marketing.
180. "Sniping 2000," pp. 52, 53.
181. See, Hogg, *The World's Sniper Rifles*, pp. 72-77; Gilbert, *Sniper*, 276-77.
182. See, "SIG SG 550 Sniper," *The Small Arms Review* (September 1998), p. 24, 28.
183. Telephone conversation with SIG Arms customer service representative, Nov. 9, 1998.
184. Springfield Armory 1998 catalog (vol. 7), p. 11.

185. *Springfield Armory Bulletin* (Vol. 1, issue 1, 1st Quarter 1997), p. 5, in files of the Violence Policy Center.
186. Plaster, 37; see also, Hogg, *The World's Sniper Rifles*, pp. 42-43; Gilbert, *Sniper*, p. 269.
187. Springfield Armory promotional material in the files of the Violence Policy Center.
188. Lau, "About the Author."
189. Texas Brigade Armory Internet web site, pages downloaded June 16, 1998.
190. Lau, "Chapter 4: The Custom Sniper Rifle and Telescopes," *passim*.