



Violence Policy Center

Research, Investigation, Analysis, & Advocacy for a Safer America

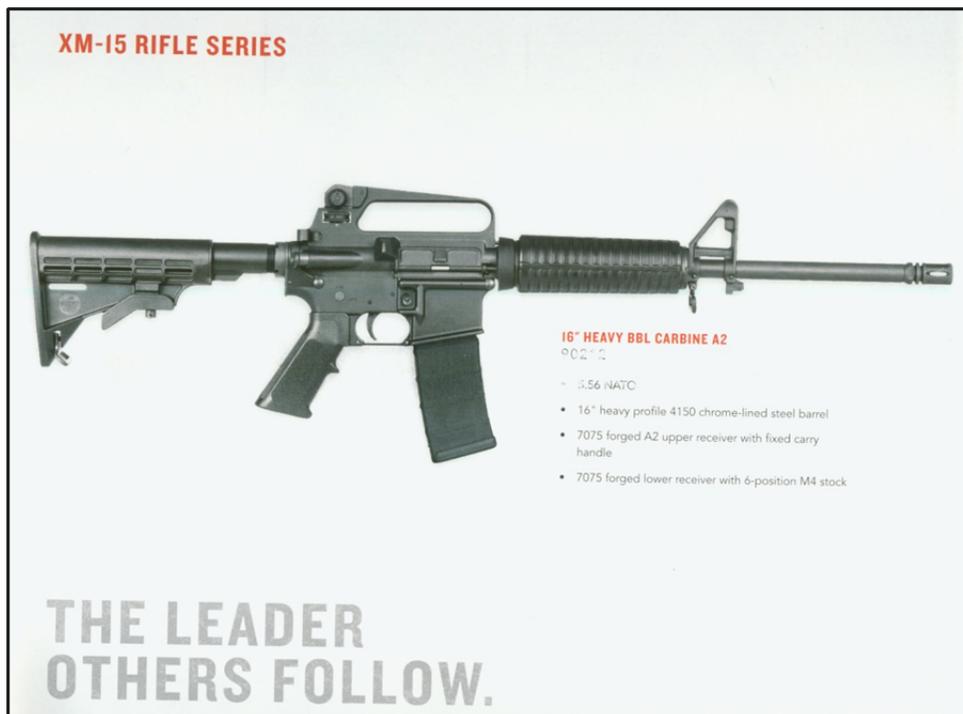
The Militarized Marketing of Bushmaster Assault Rifles

Remington Outdoor Company, formerly known as Freedom Group, is one of the largest gun manufacturers in the world and specializes in assault rifles and other military-style firearms. The company made the Bushmaster XM-15 assault rifle reportedly used at the Waffle House shooting in Nashville, Tennessee as well as the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Connecticut. An XM-15 was also used in the 2002 Washington, DC-area sniper attacks. Examples of how Remington markets its Bushmaster assault rifles, including the XM-15, follow.

Bushmaster's graphics often contain military and law-enforcement imagery while employing terminology like "duty" and "patrol" and feature phrases such as "Control Your Destiny" and "Bravery on Duty."



The cover of Bushmaster's 2018 catalog promotes the guns as "For the Free."



Inside the catalog, text for the XM-15 assault rifle describes it as “The Leader Others Follow.”



In its 2016 catalog, text for the XM-15 urges the reader to “React with Proven Confidence.”



The cover of Bushmaster's 2013 catalog promises "Justice for All."



Inside, the reader is told to "Control your Destiny."

BRAVERY ON DUTY.

300 AAC BLACKOUT®
BLACKOUT : 90899

16" M4 Contour Barrel. Four-rail, rifle length, free-float handguard. AAC BLACKOUT™ flash hider. Magpul® ACS Stock. MOE™ Grip and Enhanced Trigger Guard.

ORC
(OPTICS READY CARBINE)
BLACK : 90391

Features heavy oval M4-type handguards. Milled V-match gas block. Six-position telestock reduces overall length by 4" when fully collapsed.

The reader is also urged to show “Bravery on Duty.”

XM-15

XM-15

VERSATILITY ON THE RANGE
OR DURING PATROL

MADE IN THE USA

In promoting the XM-15 in the 2013 catalog, a helmeted shooter accompanies the promise of “Versatility on the Range or During Patrol.”

Background

In the wake of declining household gun ownership,¹ it is no secret that the gun industry has focused on semiautomatic military-style assault weapons, most notably AR-15-type rifles, in its marketing and sales efforts.

The target markets are two-fold: older males who already own firearms and can be enticed into purchasing one — or one more — of these battlefield-derived weapons; young males, who although they lack interest in the traditional shooting sports such as hunting, are intrigued by what one gun industry trade magazine calls the “tactical coolness factor.”

Remington Outdoor Group, formerly known as Freedom Group, is one of the largest manufacturers of firearms in the world and specializes in the manufacture and marketing of assault rifles. On December 14, 2012, a Bushmaster XM-15 was used by 20-year-old Adam Lanza to kill 20 first-graders and six educators at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. Less than five months after the Newtown shooting, the company’s leadership was honored by the National Rifle Association at the NRA’s annual meeting with other gun industry financial supporters who had “given gifts of cash totaling \$1,000,000 or more.”²

A driving factor in the gun conglomerate’s marketing strategy for assault weapons is the aggressive promotion of the military pedigree of its products. In its advertisements and catalogs, as seen in the previous pages, the imagery and language used to sell Bushmaster assault rifles focuses on their use in offensive, anti-personnel situations and environments. While such ads never detail what ill-defined “justice” is to be meted out with these guns by their civilian owners, mass shootings like those at Sandy Hook and now Nashville offer one horrific answer.

In its 2013 “Annual How To Sell Issue,” gun industry trade magazine *Shooting Sports Retailer* makes clear that this advertising approach is merely the tip of the spear as the gun industry changes from one catering to hunters and sportsmen to what the magazine describes as the “tactical market.” As the magazine notes:

¹ For a detailed history of gun ownership in the United States as reported by the General Social Survey (GSS) conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, see the May 2015 Violence Policy Center report *A Shrinking Minority: The Continuing Decline of Gun Ownership in America* (<http://www.vpc.org/studies/ownership.pdf>). According to NORC, in 2014 only 32.4 percent of U.S. households had a gun in the home.

² For more information, see the September 2013 Violence Policy Center study *Blood Money II: How Gun Industry Dollars Fund the NRA*, <http://www.vpc.org/studies/bloodmoney2.pdf>.

Hunters, quite frequently, will not be impressed by the “tactical coolness factor” that has drawn many shooters into the shop looking for a new gun. In fact, some of them will likely be put off by the military-esque attitude and marketing that is so common in the tactical firearms market...

The tactical coolness factor does, on the other hand, attract a lot of first-time gun buyers. Many of them are younger and unfamiliar with firearms, making them prime candidates to be unsure of what to look for or even what they want. Unlike many of the hunting demographic, these potential buyers will likely be interested only in tactical guns, and the military-ish looks and features will be big a [sic] selling point with them. As always, knowing the customer and adjusting the sales technique is crucial.

Many of the new shooters attracted to tactical guns for their first firearms purchase will think that they know guns because they've played a lot of first-person shooter video games that utilize real guns and accessories. Anyone with more than a passing knowledge about firearms recognizes that the “realistic” behavior of the real guns in these games is anything but realistic. Gamers inspired by *Call of Duty* to purchase their first gun will eventually discover that they have a lot to learn, but in the meantime it's going to take knowledgeable staff at the gun shop to help them select the right gun and accessories for their wants and needs.³

The Bushmaster advertising and catalog copy samples featured in this report illustrate what happens when a gun company decides to cater to the “wants and needs” of “potential buyers...interested only in tactical guns” and their “military-ish looks and features.”

Remington Outdoor Company has made a decision. It is willing to risk mass shootings in its quest for profit — no matter the price paid in death and injury, anguish and heartbreak.

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³ “Selling Tactical,” *Shooting Sports Retailer*, July/August 2013.