

To: U.S. Department of State, John Kerry, Tony Blinken, Heather Higginbottom, et al.
From: Pete Laric
Subject: Censoring the Internet Through Proposed Changes to ITAR
Date: July 14th, 2015

Hello. I'm the guy who designed a 3D printable .40 caliber dart pistol, and posted the plans on the internet for all to replicate.

Now that I have your attention, allow me to explain why I did what I did. This country has a long tradition of firearms ownership dating back to its inception in July of 1776. We also have the distinction of being among the most innovative nations in the world, but we are in danger of losing that edge due to an atmosphere that is increasingly hostile toward inventors.

A drawing is a representation of an idea. Drawings are the manner in which engineers (and tinkerers such as myself) express their ideas. To criminalize the publication of drawings is to criminalize the expression of ideas. It may seem awkward to call drawings "speech", but insofar as both drawings and speech are vehicles for conveying ideas, they are equivalent. In fact, there are languages such as OpenSCAD that allow designers to create printable models by simply describing them with words.

It can be no coincidence that the same people who support further restrictions on firearms ownership domestically are also proponents of restrictions on sharing information about how to make firearms. It is clear to me that this has absolutely nothing to do with "export controls", and everything to do with criminalizing the expression of ideas that threaten to render our domestic gun rights debate moot.

My father was wounded in Vietnam – quite nearly fatally – while courageously standing up against a totalitarian regime that criminalized speech and murdered those whose ideas went against those of the state. Both of my grandfathers served our country during a time when our enemy was not simply burning books, but also people. There is a critical rubicon that is crossed when a nation begins to censor ideas and criminalize thought. Once this is allowed to happen, the damage is often irreparable, and the stage is set for abusive leaders to take power and criminalize *any* speech they don't like. Today, it's "how to make a gun". Tomorrow, it could be the mere suggestion that our invasion and occupation of a sovereign foreign nation has been anything but a spectacular success.

Before 3D printers, there was *no effort* to enforce ITAR against those who published firearm designs online. Now, suddenly, obscure provisions of the U.S. Munitions List are being dredged up and invoked for the first time in a futile attempt to stop hobbyists from printing guns in their garages. This selective enforcement of laws that were probably unconstitutional to begin with can only result in those laws being struck down in court. But should the courts fail in their duty to uphold the Constitution, this will effectively result in the criminalization of the entire gunmaking hobby. Any subsequent work by rogue gunmakers would necessarily be published anonymously or pseudonymously, destroying the government's ability to police a community of hobbyists that has thus far been largely self-policing. Why force gunmaking into the shadows of the underworld, when it currently basks in the light of public scrutiny? Gunmaking hobbyists are honest and productive members of American society.

If you want to ban the printing of guns, author some legislation to that effect and try to get it passed by our elected representatives. Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY) already tried this, but Congress rightly concluded that if people want to print guns in their garages, it's their 2nd Amendment right to do so. Criminalization of speech and ideas is, quite frankly, unconstitutional and un-American. I will work tirelessly to oppose any attempt to do so in my beloved nation.

Very Respectfully,
~ Pete Laric