



Duckworth: Weapons Of War Should Be Banned, Not Be Marketed Or Sold To Untrained Civilians

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WASHINGTON D.C. - Following the preventable, horrific Highland Park massacre that claimed the lives of seven Illinoisans on the Fourth of July, U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) delivered impassioned opening remarks to a U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee hearing focused on protecting our communities from mass shootings this morning. The Senator, a mother of two young daughters, emphasized that our nation's gun violence epidemic is now the leading cause of death for young Americans and implored her colleagues to support additional commonsense gun safety reforms like reinstating the assault weapons ban to get weapons of war off our streets and protect our nation's children from senseless gun violence.



Key quotes:

“Now, I want to be clear – restoring the assault weapons ban would not prevent sportsmen from continuing to access more than 2,000 models of powerful hunting rifles.

We are not talking about your .30-06s – no mass shooter is going to grab a .30-06 to go and conduct a mass shooting ... it won't stop a parent from teaching their child to shoot with a .22 – like my daddy did with me when I was just seven years old.”

“The ArmaLite Rifle 15 – and the semi-auto successors it spawned – are weapons of war. From their portability, accuracy, rapid rate of fire, ability to penetrate certain body armor and ease of reloading – both the military-issued M4 carbine and the civilian AR-15 are functionally similar and designed for combat. The lack of a three-round burst or full-auto mechanism does not meaningfully reduce an AR-15's lethality compared to the M4 carbine.”

“It's one thing to read in horror that the Sandy Hook and Uvalde families had to wait hours to learn the fate of their babies. But have each of you truly reflected on why parents had to submit DNA tests to identify their murdered children? Have you imagined how it would feel when authorities told you that you could not view the body of your murdered child – because there was nothing left of your baby to visually identify? I beg you to question your assumptions about whether weaponry designed for war should be marketed and sold to civilians.”

Full remarks as delivered below:

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Grassley, thank you for holding today's very important hearing.

It's been 16 days since good Samaritans found two-year-old Aiden McCarthy lying bloodied and pinned beneath his unconscious father in the chaotic aftermath of the deadly mass shooting at Highland Park's Fourth of July parade.

Just a toddler, Aiden had somehow lost one shoe and was down to just one blood-soaked sock, as he kept asking for his mom and dad.

But tragically, we learned Irina and Kevin McCarthy were among the seven people murdered in what has become a uniquely American phenomenon:

Mass murderers wielding weapons of war to inflict terror and death upon innocent Americans.

My constituents—and yours as well Mr. Chairman—were eager to celebrate America at her best. Instead, they joined a rapidly growing number of victims who've experienced our Nation at her worst.

I still can't get the image of Aiden's one bloodied sock out of my mind.

I'm unable to stop thinking about what his future holds now – or what his parents' final thoughts might have been as they shielded their son from bullets raining down with their own bodies.

That's why I'm here this morning.

As the Senator representing Aiden, I refuse to let my colleagues ignore how a weapon of war forever changed this little boy's life—and the lives of so many others.

And as a mom raising two little girls who are attending school I refuse to do nothing in the face of a deadly epidemic of gun violence that is now the leading cause of death for young Americans. Let me say that now, the leading cause of death for Americans under the age of 16 in this country isn't cancer, isn't car accidents, its gun violence. Only in America.

I'm urging this Committee to demonstrate courage in supporting a ban on assault weapons and large-capacity magazines.

We can't stop *every* mass shooting. The Ranking Member spoke about identifying those with mental health issues, I agree we should do all of that. There are predictable steps that he mentioned, and that is part of it. But part of those predictable steps also includes, unfortunately, the purchasing or the building of assault weapons.

But that doesn't change a simple fact: after the assault weapons ban expired in 2004 and the Ranking Member quoted statistics from 2004 that said there had been no significant change as of 2004. However, since that ban was allowed to expire mass shootings in this country has tripled. We have more recent data, and the data shows that mass shootings in this nation have tripled since the assault weapons ban was allowed to expire.

Now, I want to be clear – restoring the assault weapons ban would not prevent sportsmen from continuing to access more than 2,000 models of powerful hunting rifles, we are not talking about your .30-06s—no mass shooter is going to grab a .30-06 to go conduct a mass shooting. They're grabbing AR-15s or they're buying the lower assemblies and building their own weapons of war. It won't stop a parent from teaching their child to shoot with a .22 like my daddy did with me when I was just seven years old. I grew up shooting, I enjoy going to the range, but my enjoyment of going to the range should not outweigh a child's right to life, to live free from the scourge of assault weapons.

My focus is on ridding our streets of a rifle that Eugene Stoner literally designed to meet Army requirements for use in combat when he designed the AR-15. It was then adopted by the Army to become the M-16 that I carried as my weapon of war for my 23 years as

a Soldier. Large capacity magazines also need to be banned. These are the items that are fueling the rising rates of mass shootings.

The ArmaLite Rifle 15 – and the semi-auto successors it spawned are weapons of war.

From their portability, accuracy, rapid rate of fire, ability to penetrate certain body armor and ease of reloading – both the military-issued M4 carbine *and* the civilian AR-15 and its variants are functionally similar and they are designed for combat.

The lack of a three-round burst or full-auto mechanism does *not* meaningfully reduce an AR-15's lethality compared to the M4.

Whether it's a Soldier engaging the enemy in combat – or an untrained mass murderer hunting children in a school – any shooter looking to kill multiple people, without wasting ammunition, will prefer a semi-auto rifle coupled with a detachable large capacity magazine that enable rapid reloading. It chambers a round that quickly. As quickly as you can pull the trigger it is chambering a new round.

Every Senator on this Committee should study what happens to a body when struck by a round traveling at a speed of greater than 3,000 feet per second.

As that emergency room doctor said, it liquefies your organs, liquefies them. You have no chance of survival.

You should seek out emergency room doctors who can show you what happens when a round penetrates a human body at high velocity and tumbles around, exploding tissue and destroying vital organs.

It's one thing to read in horror that the Sandy Hook and Uvalde families had to wait hours to learn the fate of their bodies.

But have each of you truly reflected on why parents had to submit DNA tests to identify their massacred, murdered children.

Have you imagined how it would feel when authorities told you that you could not view the body of your murdered child, because there was nothing left of your baby that you could use to visually identify them? And please could you submit some DNA?

I beg you to question your assumptions about whether weaponry designed for war should be marketed and sold to civilians.

What I'm asking this Committee to do is not easy. But our children's lives are worth the fight.

We all swore an oath to defend the Constitution, which was established to ensure domestic tranquility, promote the general welfare and secure the blessing of liberty for ourselves and future generations.

Well, I was in the Emergency Operations Center immediately following the shooting in Highland Park, and let me tell you, allowing corporations to flood our communities with weapons of war has made a mockery of that sacred preamble.

And I, on my way here, looked at Anderson Manufacturing in Kentucky, where they are currently selling the kit for the lower parts with pistol grip mil spec for an AR-15 for \$59.99. This is what we're talking about: manufacturers taking advantage and making a profit on dead babies.

We sure as hell didn't secure the blessings of liberty for Katherine Goldstein, Jacquelyn Sundheim, Stephen Straus, Nicolas Toledo-Zaragoza, Eduardo Uvaldo and Irina and Kevin McCarthy.

Or for the countless Americans who were nowhere near Highland Park, but who will now think twice before bringing their child to a hometown July 4th parade.

Or the millions of students, like my baby girl Maile, who I recently witnessed taking part in an active shooters drill. I was at her school to talk about Memorial Day with her sister's class and I looked through the window and I saw the line of preschoolers walking down the hallway. And I watched and my heart broke. I watched as my little girl was taught to crouch down with her head against a wall covering her head, with her hands in their secure location. Knowing full well that a shooter with an AR-15 coming in there, she would not have a chance no matter what her crouching position was. America's heartbreaking new normal where we routinely ingrain in our children the traumatizing fear that on any day, at any moment, they could be gunned down in their classroom should not be acceptable to any one of us.

We don't have to live this way. We can still hunt, we can still have an armed citizenry, we can still go to the range, we can still take our kids out and teach them target practice. We can do all of that. Without weapons of war being available for \$59.99.

I'm ready to restore the Federal assault weapons ban and I beg every member of this Committee, please for the sake of all of our babies, join me in this effort.

Thank you.