

A HOLD ON 3D GUN BLUEPRINTS

Judge temporarily blocks posting diagrams for printing plastic weapons

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WASHINGTON — A federal judge in Seattle on Tuesday issued a temporary restraining order to block the posting online of blueprints to use 3D printing to make untraceable and undetectable plastic guns — just hours before a website planned to upload the plans.

U.S. District Judge Robert Lasnik put a plan by Defense Distributed, an Austin, Texas, company, on hold in a ruling in a lawsuit filed Monday by attorneys general in eight states, including New York and New Jersey, that contends plastic guns pose a national security threat.

“There is a possibility of irreparable harm because of the way these guns can be made,” Lasnik said, saying they could end up in the wrong hands.

The court took action on the same day that President Donald Trump said he’s looking into his administration’s approval of 3D printable guns, a policy that reverses the Obama administration’s legal battle to block them.

“I am looking into 3-D Plastic Guns being sold to the public,” Trump said in a Twitter post Tuesday morning. “Already spoke to NRA, doesn’t seem to make much sense!”

Last week, the NRA posted a video on its website in which spokeswoman Dana Loesch opposed banning the 3D printable guns. “What you’re talking about is preventing technology and progression of existing firearm knowledge and tech right now, which never works,” she said.

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo said he will issue a cease-and-desist order, like governors in Pennsylvania and other states, to keep the company from distributing data into New York. “These weapons have no place in our state,” Cuomo said.

The guns can be made without a serial number so that they’re not traceable or without a piece of metal carrying a se-

rial number so that they would not set off alarms when going through security screening using a metal detector, said the lawsuit by the state attorneys general.

Democrats filed three last-minute bills in Congress Tuesday, but they acknowledged legislation would not be passed in time to stop the company from selling the plastic gun plans. And they acknowledged they had not won support from Republicans, who control Congress.

“The idea of these print-on-command ghost guns is every bit as scary as it sounds,” said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.).

“Where the heck has he been?” Schumer said of Trump’s last-minute tweet. “And the idea that he’ll look into it — we’ve been down that rabbit hole before. Remember bump stocks?”

Schumer said Congress will have to pass legislation to stop the homemade guns.

“On issue after issue, the Trump administration’s M.O. when there’s a crisis is to say, ‘We’ll look into it, working with the NRA.’ And then nothing happens,” he said. “As sure as we’re here today nothing is going to happen by this administration.”

The Republicans who control the House and Senate have been resistant to passing most gun restrictions, and have said little about the printable guns.

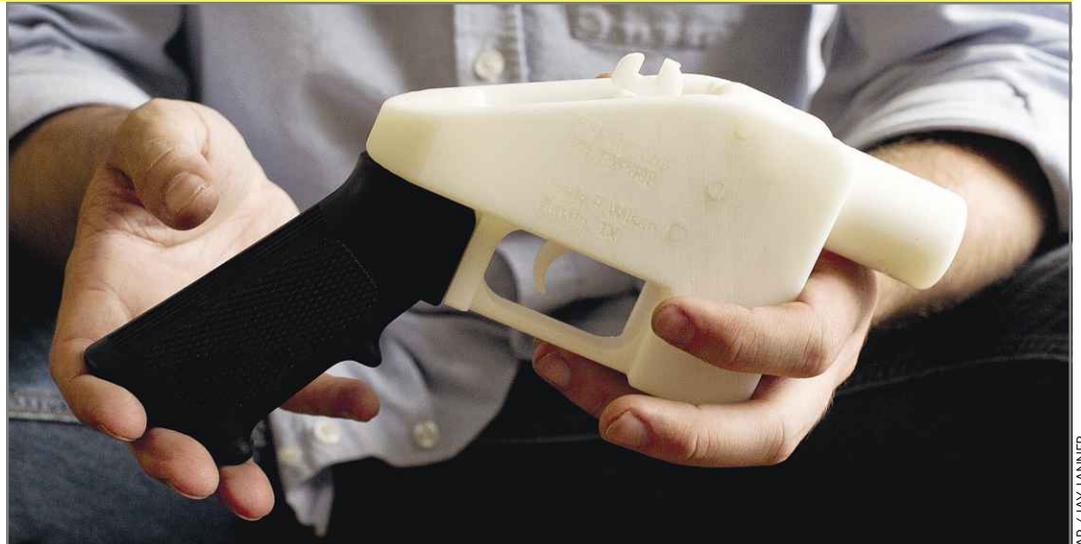
The National Sports Shooting Foundation, the lobby for major gun manufacturers, said the printable guns are expensive and difficult to produce, are not as accurate and fall under the same federal laws as conventional firearms.

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This pistol, made on a 3D printer in 2013, can pass through metal detectors and can’t be traced.

“Criminals have easier, cheaper sources,” the foundation’s fact sheet on 3D guns said. It noted there has been no record of a criminal using a 3D gun. “Criminals obtain their firearms from the black market, theft or associates,” it said.

“We do not believe that this technology will have a significant effect on the sale of firearms in the commercial marketplace,” said foundation spokesman Mike Bazinet.

Earlier this year, the Trump administration changed the policy when it settled a successful legal battle mounted by the Obama administration against a business called Defense Distributed, which publishes blueprints in the form of design data for 3D printers.

The State Department in the Obama administration succeeded in blocking the company from posting the plans online, saying that publication violated export laws that do not allow distribution of firearms to other countries.

But the State Department under the Trump administration flipped its position, saying the publication of the gun schematics does not violate the export laws.

Attorneys for Defense Distributed had contended all along that the banning of the publication of the gun blueprints violated their First Amendment rights.

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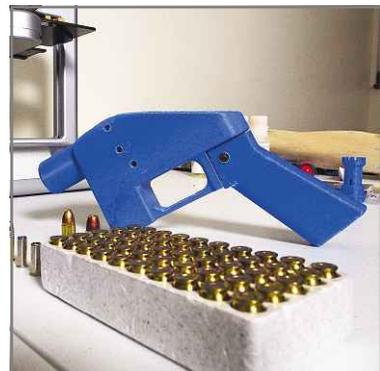
'Ghost guns' a major danger

Strong prohibitions must be enacted

Build your piece in peace."
"Legally manufacture unserialized rifles and pistols in the comfort and privacy of home."

"The age of the downloadable gun formally begins."
This is some of the dangerous drivel featured on the website of Defense Distributed, a company founded by a Texas anarchist who has spent years fighting the federal government for the right to offer blueprints for 3D printed guns.

It's not science fiction. Inexpensive 3D "printers" can use computer design tools to produce small objects. Don't be fooled by thinking of your desktop color printer, which spits out only paper. If you have the right blueprint, the right machine and the ability to assemble the parts, you can make a workable gun, possibly even an AR-15 rifle. More disturbingly, you can have a firearm that has no serial number and is therefore untraceable, a gun made of plastic that can pass unseen through metal detectors, a gun that can be made at home by someone who would have failed a background check to buy one. The guns will only get better as technology and materials improve.



AP/GETTY IMAGES / ROBERT MACPHERSON

A Liberator pistol made of parts molded on a 3D printer.

All of this adds up to serious domestic and national security issues. So-called "ghost guns" can wreak havoc if smuggled into otherwise protected spaces, from schools to airports to sports stadiums. Even if they are not made en masse, they are a boon to those we most want to be prevented from owning a gun.

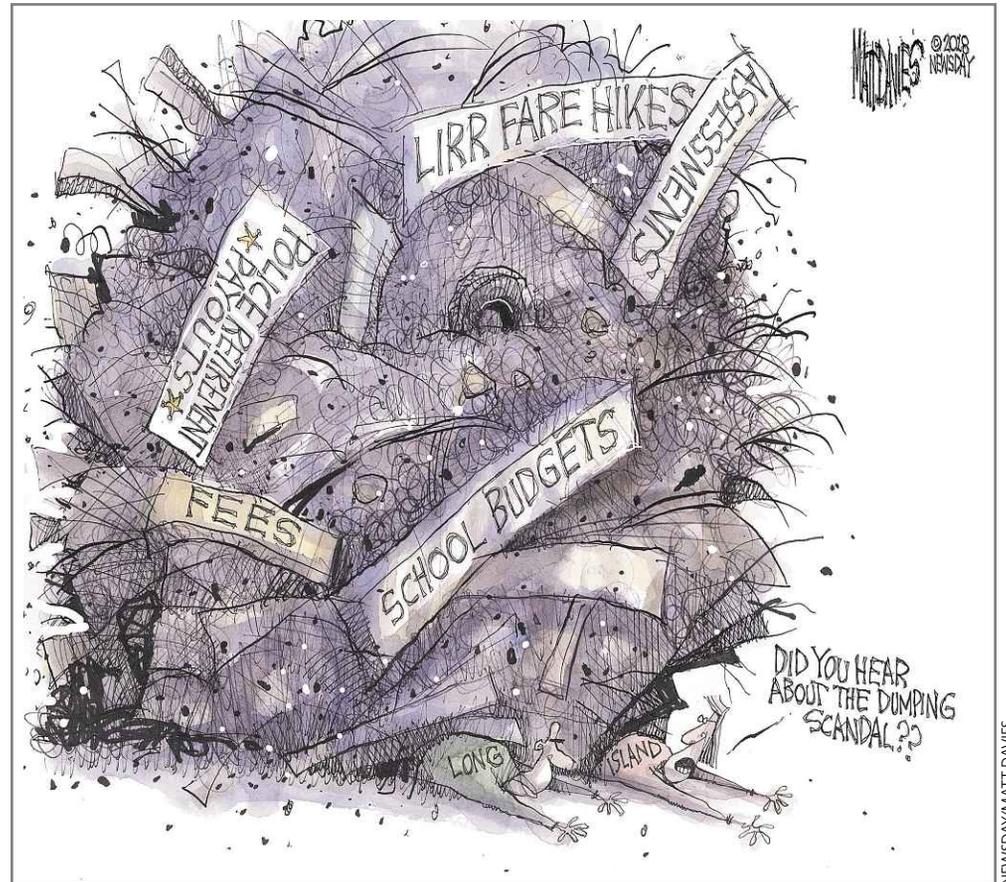
The Obama administration saw some problems with this, and forced Defense Distributed to take down its blueprints from the internet. Defense Distributed sued. The company seemed to be out of luck, with President Donald Trump's administration filing a motion to dismiss the suit. But in June, the administration reached a surprise settlement that would allow the blueprints to be posted and even pay some of the plaintiff's legal fees. Even the plaintiffs were shocked.

Perhaps Trump was, too. On Tuesday, he tweeted, "I am looking into 3-D Plastic Guns being sold to the public. Already spoke to NRA, doesn't seem to make much sense!"
It's not exactly clear what Trump plans to do about ghost guns, but we agree that allowing them doesn't make sense at all. For starters, Trump should block blueprints immediately via administrative action. This should not be a controversial debate. Both the Nassau and Suffolk county police departments are concerned that these guns present dangers to officers and the public. Laws dating back to one signed by President Ronald Reagan have sought to keep up with technology and prevent unaccountable guns from becoming easily accessible.

Defense Distributed had put some blueprints online before a temporary restraining order was granted Tuesday after a lawsuit was filed by a coalition of state attorneys general. Unfortunately, hundreds of blueprints have already been downloaded. Bills introduced in Washington Tuesday would stop online blueprints and strengthen the Reagan-era prohibition of non-detectable guns. A common ground and strong prohibitions must be found on this issue. No one needs to make guns that are untraceable or undetectable. Rescind the settlement and tighten the federal laws governing DIY weapons.

— *The editorial board*

MATT DAVIES



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LETTERS

Millions of sharks die in our fisheries

Injuries suffered by shark-attack victims may be alarming, but they provide only a glimpse into the terrifying ordeal that billions of sea animals experience when they are pierced with sharp hooks or crushed in nets and dragged out of their natural environment, suffocated for sport or taste ["DEC confirms boy was bitten by shark," News, July 20].

According to the Florida Museum's International Shark Attack File, on average only six fatalities are attributable to unprovoked shark attacks worldwide each year. By contrast, about 100 million sharks and rays are killed every year by fisheries. Fishing, including shark tournaments like those out of Montauk and Freeport, not only devastate our oceans, but the blood in

the water attracts exactly the type of unwanted conflicts beachgoers would like to avoid.

Before their next meals, I hope readers will remember that unlike sharks, humans are not natural carnivores, and we have a choice not to partake in fish or the flesh of any other animal.

*John Di Leonardo,
Malverne*

Editor's note: The writer is an anthrozoologist and president of Long Island Orchestrating for Nature, an advocacy organization.

Fewer town flyers in the mail this year

It seems that former Town of Hempstead Supervisor Anthony Santino is considering his legacy these days, in light of recent items in Newsday. In "S&P upgrades bond rating" [News, June 19], he takes

credit for the town's improved bond rating. Then in a July 27 letter, "Water testing move helped save money," he takes credit for closing the town's water testing lab, which was recently reopened. He even had the audacity to take a swipe at Supervisor Laura Gillen for a photo-op.

I can tell you that the town flyers coming to my mailbox have decreased significantly since Santino left office at the end of 2017. He was the poster child of photo-ops. His sudden concern for taxpayers also will be offset by his true legacy: the disgraceful transfers and promotions of numerous employees and the no-layoff clause he pushed through the partisan town board in his last meeting in December. This is what the taxpayers will remember.

*Robert Demarco,
Wantagh*