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Printed guns push freedom too far

By: Brian Siegel - January 23, 2013

Cody Wilson is considered by some to be the most dangerous man in the world. He is not a terrorist, not a murderer and not a dictator. He is just a young man who found a way to permanently impede gun restrictions.

Wilson developed computer code for 3-D printable gun parts and can even make an entire gun out of plastic. All someone would need is an Internet connection and a 3-D printer. This past Thursday on Glenn Beck's new libertarian-branded show "The Blaze" (libertarian-branded is an insult to libertarians, but Glenn Beck criticism will have to wait for another time), Wilson told Beck how he had made and fired rounds from each of the pieces displayed on the show, all of which were made from his computer program. His group, Defense Distributed, launched the Wiki Weapons Project, which made this program available. And Wilson seemed smug and pleased that these guns are now exponentially available.

Quite frankly, at first I didn't know what to make of it. His complete dismissal of almost all government dips into anarchism that I just can't get behind. While I can appreciate his "F the government, I want my own freedom" mentality, there is no way this could be beneficial. A culture where anyone can have a gun at the click of a button is not one I want to live in. This act bypasses background checks, does away with magazine restrictions and does away with registered serial numbers.

Which leads me to my point: We're doomed.

It can go one of two ways from here. The first being that hardened criminals and terrorists can now more easily get their hands on weapons — and much more quickly. All they need is an Internet connection. This essentially would do away with President Obama's new magazine restrictions. Of course, the government has stepped in to regulate how Wilson goes about his business, and he has tailored his guns computer code to their restrictions.

But what happens when someone isn't as compliant as Wilson? If an Anonymous-like group with purely evil motives got its hands on this code and circumvented the restrictions, then it would have nearly unlimited access to most guns. It could result in another tragedy, but one that would be exponentially harder to trace.

The second scenario might seem a little less dystopian, but I would argue it has much greater detriment to society in the long run. Because the government wants to have its hands on just about everything, it will eventually step in — and has already begun to step

in — to regulate the process of printing guns online. Now don't get me wrong, I'm all for the regulations here because I think background checks and serial numbers are not just necessary but vital. Crimes would have unregistered weapons, leading to more unsolved cases.

The government will eventually do what it always does and overregulate. The Internet will be scrutinized; anything judged by the government as even remotely threatening will be taken down for "public safety" or "national security." I have no doubt that the government will again use the terms "public safety" and "national security" loosely when regulating products like these weapons.

As P.J. O'Rourke of the Cato Institute says, "Giving power and money to the government is like giving whiskey and car keys to teenage boys." The Internet is basically man's last truly free frontier, though it is regulated to some extent, and I don't want to see it fall prey to the same police state ideology we tend to see on Capitol Hill. As if it wasn't tricky enough already, the gun issue just got a lot trickier, my friends.

Probably the one piece of sensationalism that came out of Glenn Beck's mouth that I agree with was, "Is this guy a hero or a villain?" I love the call for freedom and "F you" mentality he has toward the government, but this idea of 3-D printed guns without regulation seems borderline insane. And while I am a man who supports liberty in its purest form, I cannot support a country where anyone can run around with a gun, especially one they printed.

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