

FREE MARKET SHOOTER

“Smart Gun” Peddled By 60 Minutes Hacked With \$15 Magnets

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In an article written for Single Dude Travel about a year ago, I exposed the laughable promotion of the Armatix IP1 firearm by 60 Minutes, and of the pitfalls of “smart guns” and the legislation that will require their implementation:

They did grant a minuscule amount of deference to the New Jersey legislation that has held up smart gun development, as well as the hypocrisy of the proposed replacement, even though they made almost no mention of the stupid demands of both the old and new Weinberg bills. The whole piece was focused upon forcing the NRA and gun manufacturers to fund smart gun technology, despite dearth of demand for such guns among US consumers.

A closer look at the New Jersey legislation shows that it is indeed a mandate for smart gun technology, which is why it was so vehemently opposed by the NRA:

Basically, the Childproof Handgun Law of 2002 says that once “personalized handguns are available” anywhere in the country, all handguns sold in New Jersey must be smart guns within 30 months.

The goal of the law was to spur “research, development and manufacture” of smart guns, according to its sponsor, New Jersey state Sen. Loretta Weinberg. But in practice, supporters and critics of the law now agree, that has not been the case.

“It actually doesn’t matter if the gun has been sold,” says David Kopel, a policy analyst at the Cato Institute. “If there’s just one available for sale anywhere in the United States, then that triggers the handgun ban. So who would want to sell a smart gun knowing that, by doing so, they’d be imposing a handgun ban on New Jersey?”

Even the author of the law, New Jersey State Senator Loretta Weinberg (who has in the past has been exposed stating that “we need a bill that is going to confiscate, confiscate, confiscate”), admits that the law’s mandate has had the reverse effect, and the law should be repealed...

Opponents and the author of New Jersey’s controversial 13-year-old smart gun law, widely blamed for holding up the development of weapons that can only be fired by their owners, agreed on one thing Monday: The law needs to be scrapped.

...her “repeal” bill includes another “mandate” for gun retailers to carry smart guns on their store shelves, whether the customers want them or not:

Dismayed that the law was used “from the East Coast to the West Coast by certain parts of the gun advocacy community ... to lobby against the research, development, manufacture or sale of

such handgun,” Weinberg said, her new bill (S3249) would require that dealers carry at least one smart gun in their inventory three years after they’re on the market.

But this bill has also drawn the ire of gun rights advocates who don’t want government mandates on them or unreliable, personalized guns forced into the market.

Weinberg said her one-model-per-gun shop mandated is designed to protect retailers who want to sell the weapons from backlash. She issued a challenge to the National Rifle Association to get out of the way of the development of smart gun technology, and in return she would rescind the 2002 law, but said she was met with silence.

So how “smart” is the Armatix IP1 firearm that Weinberg wants to force New Jersey stores to stock? Smart enough that it was defeated by a “hacker” with \$15 worth of magnets:

Originally, Plore thought he’d have to develop a high-tech solution to hack the watch’s signal, so he built radio extenders to theoretically allow the gun to fire further from the watch. He was able to fire the gun up to 20 feet away from the security watch, much further than the 10 inches Armatix says its guns allow.

Then, he read the company’s patents for the gun’s technology and realized the lock was rather rudimentary. It turned out to be a metal plug that locks the firing pin. It’s released by an electromagnetic signal transmitted from the watch. This signal, he said, is easy to duplicate.

“When all you need is some magnets from Amazon, the threshold’s pretty low there. It’s the sort of thing that seems so obvious in hindsight,” Plore said. “It’s a fairly obvious flaw.”

Ultimately, he was able to unlock the watch by holding a \$15 set of magnets to the pistol at a specific angle.

And how can Armatix fix this flaw?

Plore said he spoke with Armatix about the hack in April and the company thanked him. Sadly, Plore said, this hack exposes a flaw in the hardware that likely can be fixed only with a recall. Armatix did not respond to requests for comment.

Plore said the whole ordeal highlights how smart guns are still “immature.” he also expects even more guns will be hacked at future Defcons.

So every time your “smart” gun is hacked, you’ll need to send it back to the manufacturer for a recall fix. Sounds like just the type of firearm Weinberg would want to mandate, doesn’t it?

What about the capabilities of the firearm itself? The NRA once tested the firearm, and found it to be more than lacking in its functionality:

Does the Armatix operate perfectly? Well, no; we found it to be troubling at best. NRA’s tests, conducted with staffers trained by Armatix, found a number of very serious problems:

- *The Armatix pistol initially required a full 20 minutes to pair with the watch, even with the aid of an IT pro trained in its use. Without pairing, the Armatix functions like any other handgun, capable of being fired by anyone.*
- *Once paired, a “cold start” still requires a minimum of seven push-button commands and a duration of 12 seconds before the gun can be fired.*

- *While the gun holds a maximum of 11 rounds (10+1), the best our experts could manage was nine consecutive rounds without a failure to fire (and that only once). Three or four misfires per magazine were common, despite using various brands of ammunition.*
- *Although the Armatix has a decent single-action trigger, it has the worst double-action trigger we've ever tested, requiring more force than any other pistol we've fired.*
- *The pistol must be within 10 inches of the watch during "start up." This slows and complicates the use of the pistol if one hand is injured or otherwise unavailable.*
- *The design of the Armatix's hammer prevents it from being safely thumbed forward.*
- *All this malfunction comes at a high price: At \$1,798 (\$1,399 for the base pistol and another \$399 for the enabling watch), the Armatix is a more than five times the cost of other common .22s, like Walther's excellent P22 (\$319) or Browning's tried-and-true Buckmark (\$349), and four and a half times that of Smith & Wesson's M&P22 polymer semi-auto (\$379) or Ruger's SR22 (\$379). It's also more than three times the cost of pistols like Glocks and Smith & Wesson M&Ps made in true self-defense calibers.*

But don't you worry, this is the exact type of firearm Senator Weinberg plans to mandate gun retailers stock on their shelves, as she continues to hold smart gun development on a national scale hostage to her 2002 *New Jersey State* law.

Speaking of development, how can a successful smart gun ever be developed when the manufacturers themselves have such a callous display towards not just developing a top-tier firearm, but to the ease with which it is disabled?

At the symposium, two smart-gun makers played down the threat of hacks against the connected weapons, calling it a "nuisance" but not a roadblock.

Jonathan Mossberg, the man behind the smart iGun, said the attacks Plore demonstrated were unlikely to happen in real-life scenarios, pointing out that people don't carry magnets with them everywhere.

Plore disagreed, saying there'd be more magnets available if smart guns were more mainstream.

"If there were a bunch of smart guns out there, there might be a reason for criminals to carry magnets," the hacker said in a phone interview. "It's a failure of imagination to see the potential downfalls of an insecure system."

Yes, Mossberg believes that his overpriced, underperforming firearm having its only redeeming feature easily disabled is just a "nuisance" towards development. Is it any surprise his firearm's functionality was found severely lacking during performance tests?

It sounds like he's taking the exact attitude Weinberg is taking towards smart gun development, who headed to DC just days after the Armatix gun she campaigned so heavily for was "hacked" using magnets... to continue to promote smart gun laws, refusing to even acknowledge the failures of the Armatix weapon she championed:

Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg heads to Washington for the day Thursday, waiting to kick-start a 15-year quest to require personalized "smart guns" on the shelves of New Jersey gun retailers.

Such guns would have technology keeping them from being fired by anyone other than the registered owner or, as envisioned in the case of police officers, the officers and their partners. Current New Jersey law requires them to be exclusively sold in New Jersey once they're viable – which may be unintentionally undercutting their path to the marketplace.