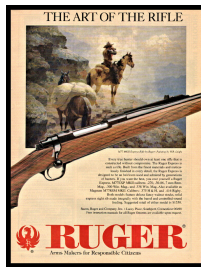


Ryan Busse - House Committee on Oversight and Reform - July 27, 2022

Good morning, Chairwoman Maloney, and thank you for inviting me.

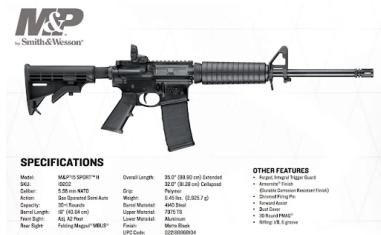
My testimony is about decisions; the ones I've made, ones the firearms industry has made, and ultimately the decisions you must make.

Like so many gun owners in America, I grew up with guns and was taught that responsibility and safety are critical **components of firearms ownership.**



In 1995 I made the decision to get into the gun industry. For the first several years of my career the same responsibility I was raised with prevailed there. Tactical gear was not allowed in the largest trade shows. Companies like Ruger even included their founding motto on all advertising; “Arms Maker for Responsible Citizens.”

By 2007, change was happening as most companies began combining guns with the political fear and conspiracy machine of the NRA. It worked very well because the same things that drove NRA **radicalization, also drove gun sales.**



Prior to 2008 guns like the AR15 were a pariah, but they represented a new untapped market, the NRA and NSSF needed new political symbols and profit, and so companies like Smith and Wesson made the decision to get into the AR15 business. A few years later, the M&P15, as in Military and Police, became the best selling rifle in America. Eventually young male gun customers in places like Parkland Florida, Highland Park IL, and Kenosha Wisconsin all decided to use an M&P15.

By 2008, Ruger made the decision to remove the responsible citizen motto from most of its public advertising. Those industry leaders who spoke out against this new trajectory were attacked and marginalized. Everyone was told that ANY new gun buyer or ANY marketing was good so long as it furthered **political aims and sold guns.**

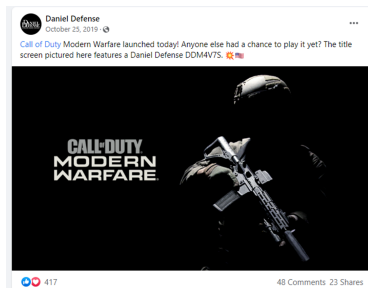


The trend of dismissing responsibility has only worsened and today the industry condones frightening marketing that openly partners with domestic terror orgs like the Boogaloo boys, a group that hopes for race wars and wears Hawaiian shirts.

There is no industry criticism of marketing like this. In fact, the maker of this Boogaloo rifle is also one of the nation's largest gun retailers and they boast of the public support of most of the largest gun companies including Smith and Wesson.

It's not that the industry and NSSF are shy about aggressively policing the actions of members. In 2018, after the Parkland shooting, Ed Stack, the CEO of Dick's Sporting Goods removed AR15s and tactical gear from his stores. Stack still sold plenty of other guns, but within days the NSSF board of governors officially expelled Stack and Dick's to let everyone know that anything short of complete devotion would not be tolerated.

I was inside the industry as new companies like Daniel Defense built businesses by advertising AR15s with slogans encouraging young men to **"Use what the special forces guys use"**



Like many companies, they also sought and celebrated the inclusion of their AR15s in first-person shooter games and movies. When Daniel Defense tweeted a picture of a toddler blessed by a proverb's verse while cradling an AR15 on the same day as the Uvalde shooter was killing kids with one of their rifles, there was no criticism from industry leadership. But there was a prestigious reward. The same NSSF board of Governors that expelled Ed Stack, elected Marty Daniel to a coveted seat on that board, a position he still holds today.

Mr. Killoy is an important **voting member of that NSSF board.**



Sadly for me, there is no place in the industry for anyone who believes in moderation or responsible regulation. If they did exist they were frightened into submission or forced out.

In my last months as an industry executive, I snapped photos like this. It's a tactical advertisement over the entrance of the SHOT show that weirdly combines revolutionary war soldiers, a modern AR15 and the promise of "daily gunfights" as a business proposition. On January 6 2021, less than a year after I took this photo, these exact components coalesced into a violent mob just a few hundred yards from here.

Despite guns being at the center of radicalized domestic terrorists, there is no industry rebuke. Not of the "come and take it" flags of Jan 6, not of armed men invading the Michigan capital, certainly not of Kyle Rittenhouse "owning the libs" by shooting and killing people at a protest with his Smith and Wesson Military and Police rifle.

Any rational person can see the direct lines from this marketing to the troubled young men who killed people in places like Buffalo, El Paso and Uvalde. Anyone can see the direct lines to our nation's most dangerous domestic terror orgs.

I am here on behalf of responsible gun owners like me who harbor deep fears about where this is leading.

I am also here to warn you that there is much more of this marketing on the way. No one from the industry is going to stop it and it's likely to get much worse.

Now, as the elected leaders of our country, you have your own decisions to make. You must decide what our nation will do about all of this.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.