

“Heralding” The Truth And Setting The Record Straight

Friday, September 21, 2007

The Miami Herald, which on several occasions over the years has called for renewal of the Clinton Gun Ban, has done so again, and made some irresponsibly inaccurate claims in the process.

The newspaper brought up the issue again in September, after Shawn LaBeet, a/k/a Kevin Wehner, used some sort of AK-47-type rifle to murder one Miami-Dade police officer and wound three others, after two of the officers followed him to his house in connection with a possible burglary. Several years before, LaBeet had faced charges of aggravated assault and battery with a firearm, for shooting his girlfriend in the leg after marijuana turned up missing from his house.

Following LaBeet’s shooting of the police officers, the Herald’s editorial staff claimed that the Clinton ban should be reinstated not only because of that crime, but also because “Seung-Hui Cho used a high-capacity assault weapon to kill 32 people at Virginia Tech last April.”

The newspaper was wrong on both points. Expiration of the Clinton ban, which took effect in 1994, had no effect on foreign-made AK-47-type rifles, because those rifles were banned from importation by a more restrictive BATF regulation in 1989, which BATF made even more restrictive in 1998. And, as widely reported in numerous other newspapers and in official reports, there were no “assault weapons” at Virginia Tech.

Meanwhile, Herald columnist Ana Menendez said that America is a “thoroughly messed up society,” and that LaBeet’s rifle “can fire 600 rounds in one minute.”

Of course, if Menendez had bothered to get her facts straight before voicing her opinion, she would have discovered three things. First, while a fully-automatic assault rifle may have a cyclic rate of 600 rounds per minute, La Beet’s so-called “assault weapon” was a semi-automatic.

Second, while a fully-automatic rifle might be capable of firing 10 rounds per second, and there are 60 seconds in a minute, to fire 600 rounds would require 19 or 20 magazine changes, depending on how many rounds were loaded into standard-capacity 30-round magazines. (Typically, only 28 or 29 rounds are loaded, for improved reliability). The magazine changes alone would require almost all of Menendez’ “one minute.”

Third, due to the heat build-up associated with firing ammunition, the sustained rate of fire for such a rifle is roughly one round every 4-5 seconds. For example, the Army states that the sustained rate of fire for an M16 is 12-15 rounds per minute--enough for defending the country, but apparently not enough for a newspaper columnist pushing an agenda against gun ownership.

Since neither the Herald’s editorial staff nor its hyperbolic columnist were interested gathering the facts on the so-called “assault weapon” issue, they also failed to mention that several studies conducted for Congress under the auspices of the National Institutes of Justice, and by the Congressional Research Service, found that the Clinton ban’s gun provisions had no discernable effect on crime, and its magazine provisions may have increased criminally-inflicted gun woundings.

For more information on the Clinton Gun Ban, please visit <http://www.clintongunban.com/> .