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Mr Andrew Mercer
Chief Executive
National Rifle Association
Bisley
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23 October 2018

Dear Mr Mercer

Re: Offensive Weapons Bill

Thank you for your letter of 18 October 2018 regarding the Offensive Weapons Bill.

The National Crime Agency (NCA) has been providing technical advice on certain aspects of the Bill in recent months, specifically the proposed prohibition of the .50 calibre rifle.

The letter to which you refer to reflects our professional assessment. There is no intent from my organisation to make misleading or hyperbolic statements on this subject. The description of the rifle's capability was to put into perspective for non-shooters a true reflection of the rifle's capability. The NCA is an operationally independent law enforcement organisation and it is our responsibility to set out the implications to public safety of these weapons being held on a private certificate. It is probably unsurprising that our two organisations see this very differently. Our responsibility is to the public at large, not to a membership group.

As I set out in my letter of 11 October, there is no current recorded recent use of these weapons in crime. However, I also made clear that the prospect that one could never be stolen by a criminal gang was plainly wrong as this has already occurred in 2016 when we were fortunately able to recover the rifle; and that risk has to be considered in the context that greater numbers of firearms are being stolen, including from victims with comprehensive security arrangements. This suggests the targeting, by

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organised crime groups, of certificate holders. I also alluded to the marginal, but relevant, risk connected to the diversion of weapons to criminal gangs via corrupt dealers or certificate holders. In particular I want to highlight that the holder of a firearms certificate for a .50 calibre rifle received a 14 year custodial sentence for conspiracy to supply prohibited weapons and ammunition to a criminal gang. It is in that context that we have set out the case regarding .50 calibre rifles.

I fully recognise the strength of feeling attached to the debate on private ownership of firearm but this is for Parliamentarians to decide on where the balance lies. The primary role for Law Enforcement Agencies such as ours is to preserve public safety and the advice that we provide needs to be seen in that context.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rodhouse', written in a cursive style.

Steve Rodhouse
Director General Operations