

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:43 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

**Memorandum on Importation of
Assault Pistols**

August 11, 1993

*Memorandum for the Secretary of the
Treasury*

Subject: Importation of Assault Pistols

A category of pistols commonly referred to as assault pistols has increasingly become the weapon of choice for drug dealers, street gang members, and other violent criminals. These pistols, generally characterized by their bulky military-style appearance and large magazine capacity, include domestically manufactured TEC-9's and MAC-10's as well as imported models like the Uzi pistol and the H&K SP-89. Their popularity appears to stem from their intimidating appearance and their considerable firepower.

These weapons have been used to harm and terrorize many Americans, particularly our children, in recent years. As a result, it is no longer possible to stand by and witness the deadly proliferation of these weapons without acting to protect our communities.

Although addressing the domestic production of these weapons requires a change in the statute, which I support, existing law already bans the importation of firearms unless they are determined to be particularly suitable for or readily adaptable for sporting purposes. I am informed that shortly after enactment of the Gun Control Act of 1968, the Treasury Department adopted a factoring system to determine whether handguns were importable pursuant to this standard. The system entails the examination of the firearm against a set of criteria, with points being awarded for various features. A minimum score is required before importation is approved. The criteria and weighted point system were designed to address the crime gun of the day, the cheap, easily concealable "Saturday Night Special." Under this 25-year old system, small caliber, easily concealable handguns score few points and are banned from importation. However, assault-type pistols—the new crime gun of the day—because

of their large size, weight, and caliber, easily score the necessary points to qualify for importation even though none of these pistols appears to have any legitimate sporting purpose. Accordingly, it is time to reassess how the present regulatory approach can be made more effective in achieving the legislative directive to preclude importation of firearms that are not particularly suitable for or readily adaptable for sporting purposes.

I hereby direct you to take the necessary steps to reexamine the current importation factoring system to determine whether the system should be modified to ensure that all nonsporting handguns are properly denied importation. You have advised me that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) will issue a notice of proposed rule-making in the near future that will propose changes to the factoring system to address the assault pistol problem. You have further advised me that effective immediately action on pending applications to import these weapons will be suspended, and that final action on any application will be delayed until this review process is completed.

Nothing herein shall be construed to require actions contrary to applicable provisions of law. You are hereby authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

William J. Clinton

**Memorandum on Gun Dealer
Licensing**

August 11, 1993

*Memorandum for the Secretary of the
Treasury*

Subject: Gun Dealer Licensing

A major problem facing the Nation today is the ease with which criminals, the mentally deranged, and even children can acquire firearms. The gruesome consequences of this ready availability of guns is found in the senseless violence occurring throughout the country with numbing regularity. While there is not one solution to the plague of gun-related violence, there is more than suf-

ficient evidence indicating that a major part of the problem involves the present system of gun dealer licensing, which encourages a flourishing criminal market in guns.

The Gun Control Act of 1968 established a licensing system for persons engaged in businesses of manufacturing, importing, and dealing in firearms. These licensees are allowed to ship firearms in interstate commerce among themselves, and are required to abide by State laws and local ordinances in their sale of firearms to non-licensees. They are also prohibited from selling firearms to felons, certain other classes of persons, and generally to out of state persons. This Act also established a comprehensive record-keeping system and authorized the Secretary to conduct inspections to ensure compliance with the Act. The statutory qualifications for a licensee are that the applicant is at least 21 years of age, is not a felon or other person prohibited from possessing firearms, has not willfully violated the Gun Control Act, and has premises from which he intends to conduct business. The license fee for a basic dealer's license is only \$10 a year.

The minimal qualification standards of the statute, coupled with policies of neglect and opposition to legitimate regulatory efforts by past Administrations, leave us with a situation where in some ways we have made it easier to get a license to sell guns than it is to get and keep a driver's license. Today there are in excess of 287,000 Federal firearms licensees, and a great number of these persons probably should not be licensed. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) estimates that only about 30 percent of these are bona fide storefront gun dealers. ATF estimates that probably 40 percent of the licensees conduct no business at all, and are simply persons who use the license to obtain the benefits of trading interstate and buying guns at wholesale. The remaining 30 percent of licensees engage in a limited level of business, typically out of private residences. While the Federal statute creates no minimum level of business activity to qualify for a license, many of the licensees in this category operate in violation of State and local licensing, taxing, and other business-related laws. Since the overall purpose of the Gun Control Act was to assist State and local gun

control efforts, at the very least we need to coordinate the Federal licensing process with the appropriate State and local agencies.

This Administration is committed to doing more to prevent this criminal market in illegal guns from continuing to flourish. Since all new firearms used in crime have at some point passed through the legitimate distribution system, Federal firearms licenses represent the first line of defense in our efforts to keep guns out of the hands of criminals.

Accordingly, you have informed me that you will direct the Department of the Treasury and ATF to take whatever steps are necessary, to the extent permitted by law, to ensure compliance with present licensing requirements, such as:

- (a) improving the thoroughness and effectiveness of background checks in screening dealer license applicants;

- (b) revising the application process to require the applicant to supply all information relevant to establishing qualification for a license, and to require more reliable forms of identification of the applicant, such as fingerprinting, to assist in identifying an applicant's criminal or other disqualifying history;

- (c) making the "premises" requirement of the statute more meaningful by increasing field checks and the use of other procedures to verify compliance;

- (d) increasing the scrutiny of licensees' multiple handgun sales reports and providing automated access to multiple sales report information by serial number for firearms trace purposes;

- (e) requiring dealers to obtain more reliable identification from purchasers;

- (f) reviewing sanctioning policies to determine the feasibility and desirability of adding the option of license suspension for certain violations;

- (g) expanding the use of cooperative agreements with State and local law enforcement agencies to address licensing and trafficking problems;

- (h) expanding ATF's capabilities to utilize effectively the firearms transaction records of out-of-business licensees for tracing purposes through the use of automation and other technology.

Acting pursuant to your statutory authority, you shall make such determinations and issue orders, regulations and rulings, as appropriate, to achieve the objectives stated in this memorandum.

I further direct that you initiate these actions as soon as possible and report your progress implementing these and other measures consistent with the foregoing to me within 90 days and annually thereafter.

All Executive agencies shall, to the extent permitted by law, cooperate with and assist you in carrying out the objectives of this memorandum. You shall consult with the Attorney General, the Director of National Drug Control Policy, and other Executive agencies as necessary to coordinate and implement the objective of this memorandum. To the maximum extent possible, the Attorney General, through the Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance, will expand support to State and local agencies working with ATF on joint projects relating to licensing and trafficking in firearms. Nothing in this memorandum shall be construed to require actions contrary to applicable provisions of the law. You are hereby authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

William J. Clinton

**Remarks Announcing the
Nomination of General John
Shalikashvili To Be Chairman of the
Joint Chiefs of Staff**

August 11, 1993

The President. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. It's a great honor for me to be here today with the Vice President, Secretary Aspin, and General Powell to introduce to you and to our Nation the person whom I have selected to replace Colin Powell as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvili. He's widely known to his friends as General Shali. And since we're going to be seeing a lot of each other and you're going to have to write a lot about him, I think I'll just start using the shortened version of his name.

General Shali is superbly well qualified for this position. He is a soldier's soldier, a prov-

en warrior, a creative and flexible visionary who clearly understands the myriad of conflicts, ethnic, religious and political, gripping the world, as well as the immense possibilities for the United States and for the cause of freedom that are out there before us.

He has shown a proven ability to work with our allies in complex and challenging circumstances. He has shown me a real concern for the ordinary men and women who have enlisted in our armed services and who are living through this difficult and challenging period of downsizing. He understands how to downsize the Armed Forces and still maintain the strongest military in the world, with the equipment and, most important, the trained force with the morale we need to always fight and win when we have to.

And finally, I am convinced that he is in a unique position to be an advocate for the men and women in the armed services and for the national security of the United States to the Congress, to the country, and to our military allies throughout the world.

General Shali entered the United States Army as a draftee and rose through the ranks to his current position of Supreme Allied Commander in Europe and the commander in chief of all United States forces there. He's demonstrated his outstanding military talents repeatedly throughout a distinguished career from the day he was first drafted into the Army. He's a decorated Vietnam veteran. He ran Operation Provide Comfort in Iraq. He served on the Joint Chiefs of Staff as General Powell's assistant. He has the deep respect of both the troops who have served under him and the military leaders who have worked with him.

I selected him because I believe he has the ability to lead and to win any military action our Nation might ask of him. Above all, I am confident that in every instance he will give me his absolutely candid and professional military advice, which as President I must have.

He is also a shining symbol of what is best about the United States and best about our armed services. There is much more to his life than most Americans now know. It is a great American story. It began as so many