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Report of the UFA for France

You may remember last year at this same meeting, brought to your knowledge about the new French law that assumes the year of 1900 as cut-off date to consider a weapon being for "collection". The date of the model is retained and not the date of manufacture.

This is a major breakthrough that revolutionizes collecting in France.

This law an agreement between France's right wing and left wing political parties. It was voted unanimously in each room, Deputies and Senate. We may expect that this law will become effective at the defined date of September 7 of 2013, whatever the political color of the government at this time.

A nuanced implementation:

1900 is a whole theoretical date as the law stipulates:

- To remove from the quality of "collection weapon" to any weapon deemed "dangerous" by authorities: **"proved dangerous"**.
 - Thus, during the parliamentary work for the development of the law, we were bluntly told that the 8 mm revolver model 1892 and the Mauser automatic pistol C1896 would not be classified as "weapon of collection".
 - We were also told that it would be abnormal for a Mauser 1898 repeating rifle to be a "collection weapon", while a Springfield 1906 based on an equivalent mechanical principle would be classified as a "hunting weapon".
 - During our initial discussions with the Ministry it came out that what frightened the authorities are the weapons of mass market and low prices. As the Russian revolver Nagant 1895/35. While it is logical that the original 1895 model with markings of Imperial Russia is classified as antique firearm, the Soviet model 1935 worth € 200 can fall into any wrong hands.
- To set forth a complementary list, to define additional weapons as weapon for collection.

We can summarize as follows: It is "1900" with a list less, and a list more.

Wider rights:

The second innovation is the future introduction of the "collector's card".

It opens the holder of a collector's card the right to purchase and own weapons of the C category, while this right was previously reserved to only target shooters and hunters. Collectors fear this will become a prerequisite for detaining D category weapon. There is no question about it. Indeed, these weapons must be collected freely without any declaration obligation.

We wanted to provide access to weapons of the B category to anyone. We failed on this point. And yet we proposed detention without ammunition. Collectors will be satisfied with firearms of the B category, deactivated only.

To obtain the collector's card, the candidate must meet the same conditions of health and non-judicial condemnation as target shooters and hunters.

Patience is a virtue:

The law stipulates a delayed implementation of 18 months. Thus, it will theoretically be applicable on September the 7th.

In February, the Office of the Ministry of Interior invited us for the first time. And we discovered that the new team took to heart his role in making the distinction between the legal owner and the other including the outlaw: Facilitate the life of the firsts and complicate the one of the other.

Dark clouds:

By end of April of this year a tragedy occurred at Istres, in southern France: A "gun lover" murdered three people in the street with a neutralized Kalashnikov illegally restored to firing condition.

The press gloated by pressing the apparent ease to restore the firing capabilities of a neutralized weapon. We made many statements about this point. And we largely explained that "passionate" collector is a reasonable person, and has nothing to do with this madman who better falls under the responsibility of psychiatry and now justice.

Then, there was the abolition of the additional list of collection weapons in Belgium. We based our entire communication strategy by citing as example our Belgian neighbors. And in this sense we succeeded. But now, our whole argument is shattered.

Aspects of the new law

The new law brings in new good things:

- It removes the French specificity of a classification based on the caliber. Now the classification is in one of the four categories based on the "capability to fire repeatedly and the number of shots fired without the need for resupplying the weapon".
- It allows for the permanent deactivation of ordnance of less than 20 mm. This was not possible before. But the collector is not allowed to possess ammunition of the B or A category.

But keep active some bad things:

- The magazines and other feeding devices are still classified in the same category as the gun they belong too.
- The collector will be very penalized: For instance, the belts of WWI machine-guns will still be banned! We will ask that the old magazines and are classified as "collection items".
- It does not allow explosive ordnance above 20 mm to be deactivated. As a consequence, WWI big shells set around the many war memorials will be forbidden. Totally absurd!
- Smooth bore riot guns (short or long) will still be classified in B category.

Moreover some very bad things are introduced:

- The logic of this law was to complicate the lives of offenders. The criminal aspect is of utmost severity.
- The problem is that will be an "offender" a collector who will be late declaring a weapon. The real villain and too passionate collector are considered on the same standpoint. Thus, because of a simple oversight, this "new offender" may be given a large fine. The penalty may also be associated with the interdiction to attend gun shows, shooting ranges, destruction even for licensed weapons. It is utterly disproportionate!
- Anyone can be sentenced "forbidden to access to weapons" for a misdemeanor unrelated with weapons.
- There is also a provision that allows the authorities to classify anything they decide, in any of the categories A, B and C. The authorities can introduce what they want. Thus a weapon normally classified as C can be classified into B and so on.

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Going back to our subject, we opted to stay brief in tis presentation; so many things could still change because of events. We must quietly wait that the application decrees be published for an application in September.

At the European level:

- We must all be vigilant to keep the current four categories and do not move to two categories.
- We must ensure that the mutual recognition of neutralization (deactivation) standards does not end up in an irrational accumulation of uncoordinated requirements pressed by each country. This would result in transforming valuable collectable weapons in solid blocs of scrap metal, while our expectation is that the conditions that led to the tragedy in Istres become impossible forever.

Thank you for your attention

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