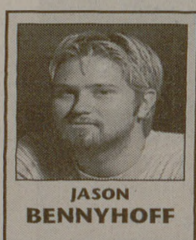


OPINION

THE BATTALION

Fire power Lawmakers should outlaw military rifles

A recent article in Rolling Stone reported an entire subculture of Americans dedicated to sniping and the use of ultra, high-powered, military firearms. In the story, backwoods frontiersmen posing as normal people, take out their adolescent aggression by discharging powerful firearms, evidently for "fun."



JASON BENNYHOFF

Burt, chairman of the Fifty Caliber Shooters Association, say there is no reason to criminalize the use of these weapons. Burt states, correctly, that there is no record of a .50-caliber sniper rifle, such as the

Once upon a time, it was legal to buy and own a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) this turned out to be a mistake police departments the across the nation would live to lament. After the invention

them against police. Granted, large, sniper rifles weigh between 25 and 40 pounds, making them much heavier than a BAR, and they fire far slower. However, these facts make it less likely they will be used in an armed robbery and more likely they will be used by a lunatic at the top of a college bell tower.

Charles Whitman did not have a .50-caliber rifle to shoot during his infamous rampage in Austin. He could only shoot passersby with ease, not armored car drivers. But he also did not have an automatic weapon. Whitman used precise shooting with bolt-action, hunting rifles for the majority of his killing. One only can imagine the destruction he could have wreaked had he been using a rifle designed to shoot straight through a brick wall rather than simply fell a deer in the forest.

One would assume that the Brady Bill would have outlawed weapons such as these, but instead it applies only to assault weapons — what the bill defines in part as "weapons not operated by lever, bolt, slide or pump." Hence, these large bolt-action rifles are exempt from the bill.

Considering the controversy that surrounded the Brady Bill, it is unlikely that this latest measure to restrict firearms will pass, especially with a Republican in the country's highest office. America can only sit and wait, hoping that the .50-caliber's unblemished crime record stays that way.

Jason Bennyhoff is a senior journalism major.



CHAD MALLAM/THE BATTALION

Windrunner, being used in a crime. However, there was no record of an assault rifle being used in a crime.

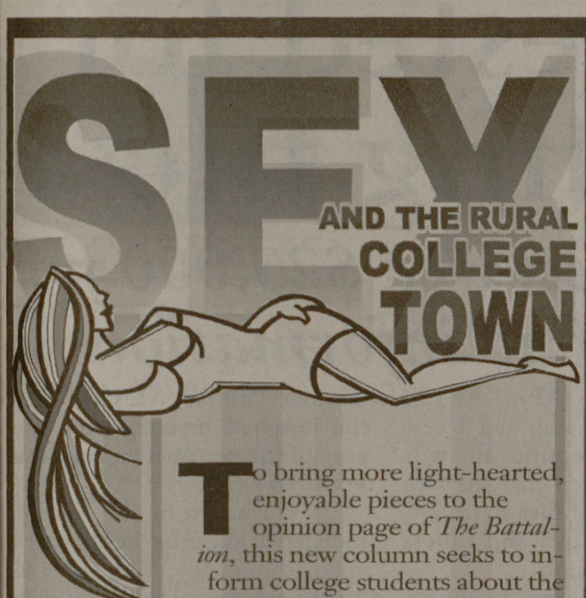
of the gun, gangsters realized its potential uses, and some of the most colorful characters of the era including Bonnie and Clyde, used

They lie on hillsides, peppering steel targets with bullets from nearly a mile away. Among the weapons, they use are the ArmaLite AR-50 and the EDM Windrunner, both .50-caliber sniper rifles manufactured to kill people and pierce armored vehicles from thousands of yards away. And to do this, they did no more paperwork than an 18-year-old buying a pellet gun at a local sports store. The scary thing is that the story is true, and the weapons of near mass destruction these men use are legal.

A number of lawmakers, including Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Cal., and Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Cal., are working to change that, however. These legislators are promoting a bill that would reclassify these behemoth rifles for military use only, making them nearly impossible for an average citizen to buy. Inevitably, this effort will produce a backlash from conservative gun lovers. Nonetheless, these guns must be banned for the safety of the public. Gun advocates, including John

Windrunner, being used in a crime. However, there was no record of an assault rifle being used in a crime.

of the gun, gangsters realized its potential uses, and some of the most colorful characters of the era including Bonnie and Clyde, used



To bring more light-hearted, enjoyable pieces to the opinion page of *The Battalion*, this new column seeks to inform college students about the current state of love and sex in a rural college town. If this column offends some, sorry, but hopefully in time, the humor generated from this endeavor will make this column a *Batt* landmark (at least until I am sick of writing it).

With so many people getting "hoed up" for a night at Northgate, Harry's or Coffee Station, it seems everyone is out to get some, and get it now. From a school that calls "mugging down" a tradition and has underage drinking as rampant as malaria in a Southeast Asian country, has casual sex become too casual?



JEFF KEMPF

"Without sounding like a prude, sex has become so cheap. A friend of mine can't control herself and throws morals out the window when it comes to sex. But I cannot judge people. Unfortunately it is too casual, and people think it is cool to say they slept with someone after they got trashed. It is not. I am happy to be a virgin in college with a healthy relationship — I just live vicariously through television. Why not?"

— Sarah Bieda, junior education major and public policy research institute supervisor

"There is nothing wrong with it, but people need to be careful. People and sex are the same in this college as in any big city. Sex is one of the basic needs of life. So if it must be casual, and that is the only way to get it, just be careful. Always wonder about the person you are trying to hook up with. Girls may wear what they do to get noticed, not necessarily to get sex, but if they're looking for it..."

— Russell Durrant, senior sports management major

From virgins to the ladies of *Moulin Rouge*, everyone has an opinion on casual sex. We all have to start asking the question, is it okay to succumb to pure physical attraction?

If you meet someone at a bar or club and cannot seem to think of anything but really getting to know that person you should consider your options. You could go home with that person and probably regret the entire incident, go home with that person and completely enjoy yourself by throwing responsibility out the window or you can decide to go on a date with that person (at least one) to see if you are really interested in a moment of bliss.

One thing is certain; try to figure out if you really are attracted to the individual or if it is just the three pitchers, two vodka tonics, ludes and weed that attracted you to the person in the first place. With a uterus in the equation, STIs are not the only thing a casual-sex couple has to worry about. So if the moment arises when physical attraction takes over all thought processes, make sure that safe sex finds its way into the bedroom, car, bathroom or wherever. Hey, think of it as being somewhat kinky (another column entirely) by calling it a ménage a trois (You, the hot clubber with no name and the condom).

If your weekends continue to remind you of a random sex *Groundhog Day*, you may want to rethink your life's direction. Some find comfort in chocolate, others find it in Nintendo, but, honestly, blaming the bartender or your parents' lack of love during early childhood is no excuse for cheapening the temple God gave you.

Make sure you are doing it for yourself.

Jeff Kempf is a senior management major.



Cannot count on Kyoto to protect

For months, members of the media, Democrats in Congress and unemployed, environmentalist protesters have been complaining about the Bush administration's opposition to the Kyoto global warming protocol. Secretary of State Colin Powell has called it "a dead letter," and President George W. Bush has called the treaty "fatally flawed."



MARK PASSWATERS

Last week, leaders of the European Union criticized Bush for his opposition to Kyoto. "We don't understand why the American government cannot live up to the agreements that the former administration agreed to," said Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson.

Although trying to prevent global warming is a great idea, the treaty would do little toward these means. But it would make the United States suffer for the sins of others. An examination of the protocol shows the Bush administration's stance to be well-founded, while many Europeans come out looking like hypocrites.

Global warming is a global issue. The Kyoto treaty tries to localize it by imposing restrictions on certain nations, while letting others not change anything. The United States, being the most prosperous nation — while not even being close to the largest net polluter —

would be required to cut carbon dioxide emissions by 30 percent. Nine of the top 20 emitters, including massive polluters China and India, are completely exempt from making changes by the Kyoto protocol.

Developing nations, as Bush pointed out last week, emit more net greenhouse gas emissions than developed nations. Developing nations are not expected to make changes under the Kyoto protocol. In addition, forests and other natural absorbers of carbon dioxide, known as carbon sinks, were not considered by the Kyoto protocol.

In his Wednesday column in the *Wall Street Journal*, Pete DuPont said that in 1997, the Senate found the treaty so biased that it voted 95-0 to reject it. In addition, Charles Krauthammer of *The Washington Post*, in his June 18 column, noted how even though none of the nations in the European Union had ratified the treaty, they still complain about the United States' position. The Swedish environmental minister, Kjell Larsson may claim that as of now Europe is the world's leader on environmental concerns, but the record disputes that notion.

Gregg Easterbrook, author of *New Republic*, points out that "American ecological standards are far more strict than European rules, and have been for 20 years." Easterbrook goes on to say, "Paris today has worse smog than Houston; water quality, especially those of rivers, is lower

in Europe than in the United States; acid rain reduction has been more rapid in the United States than in Europe; European Union nations like Greece, Italy and Portugal still discharge huge volumes of untreated municipal wastewater, a practice banned in America."

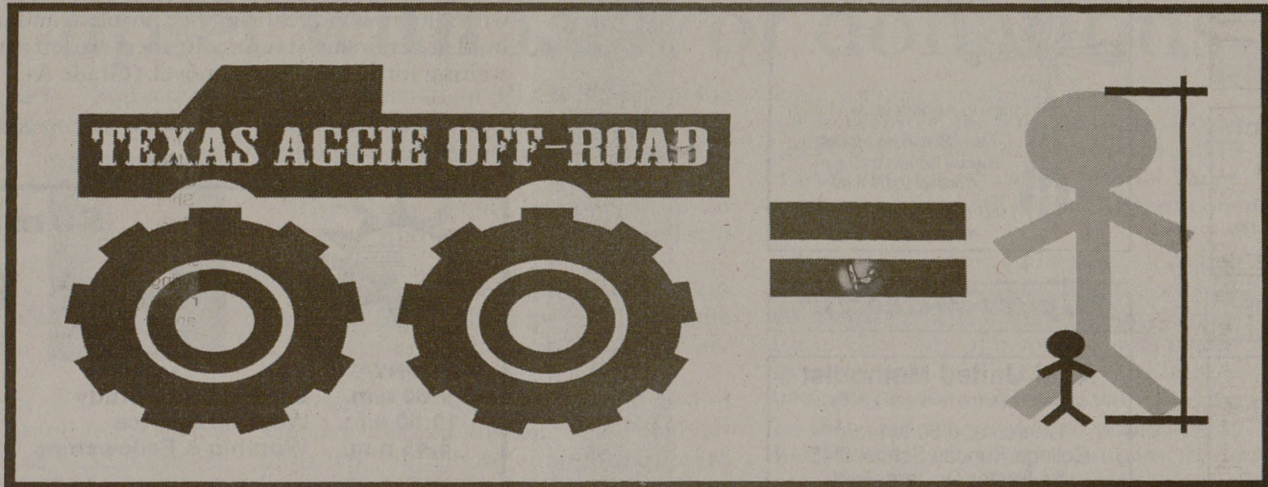
It is ironic that France's president Jacques Chirac can claim that "France will be one of the leaders on this issue," yet his nation was the last country to cease having above ground nuclear weapons tests and is the only country to undertake a terrorist act — the destruction of the ship *Rainbow Warrior* — against Greenpeace.

The Clinton Energy Department estimated that compliance with Kyoto would reduce America's rate of economic growth by 3 to 4 percentage points, or \$350 billion. This would be fine, if the rest of the world was required to follow the same rules. Blaming one nation for the same thing that others are doing is wrong, damaging to the world economy and gives environmental hypocrites a sense of accomplishment while the problem still exists.

The Bush administration is right to reject the Kyoto treaty. They have not rejected the idea of stopping global warming. Working toward that goal, and a treaty that will actually help the planet, is noble. The supporters of Kyoto are not.

Mark Passwaters is a senior electrical engineering major.

CARTOON OF THE DAY



THE UN-CARTOONIST ©

The *Battalion* encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

The *Battalion* - Mail Call
014 Reed McDonald
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX
77843-1111

Campus Mail: 1111
Fax: (979) 845-2647

E-mail: battletters@hotmail.com