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Ailing Gun Industry Confronts Outrage Over Glut of Violence

Hurt by Used Market, Makers Search for Buyers

By ERIK ECKHOLM

Improbable as it may seem at a time of escalating drug wars and senseless schoolyard shootouts, the American gun industry is staggering after a decade of sluggish sales.

This is not to say that guns are about to become scarce. In each of the last several years, four million to five million firearms — including two million handguns — were added to a vast civilian gun supply believed to total close to 200 million. And through the industry's recession a few companies have thrived by selling hundreds of thousands of \$70, pocket-sized pistols each year to frightened people for self-protection, and sometimes to criminals.

But total sales of rifles, shotguns, pistols and revolvers peaked back in 1975, at more than six million. And so

the gun companies, in the best corporate manner, now seek to entice more people to buy guns, and those who already own them to buy more.

Just a Business?

An ordinary corporate goal — and one that irreconcilably collides with the growing sense among many Americans of a nation bleeding from an oversupply of firepower.

That clash of perspectives is perhaps the most startling contrast in the world of America's 200 million guns. The gun story includes beer-can plinkers in the Arizona desert, deer hunters in Maine and Walter Mitty commandos in Miami who unwind by shooting paramilitary assault weapons. It includes Connecticut craftsmen who tool fine shotguns, crooked Indiana dealers who funnel weapons to Chicago's drug-selling gangs, the Bronx storekeeper who keeps a pistol under the counter and the Brooklyn teen-ager who last month shot two classmates dead in a high school hallway with a .38 revolver.

However America's guns are ultimately used, their story begins with the companies that make them. Revered as a bulwark of American freedom, reviled as accomplices in murder, gun makers just want to sell their products, like any other business.

A Too Durable Good

While recession, public hostility, a decline in hunting and stiff competition from imports have all hurt sales, the industry is now beginning to worry about another, more unusual threat: its products last too long. Producers wonder whether the American market is finally getting saturated.

"We've woken up to the fact that these guns are not wearing out, and used guns are competing with our new production," said William B. Ruger Sr., chairman of Sturm, Ruger & Company of Southport, Conn., a leading manufacturer of handguns and rifles. "People are buying guns for half the money. I



Bringing his campaign to Louisiana on the last weekend before "Super Tuesday," Gov. Bill Clinton received a blessing from the Rev. Paul Morton at a

rally at Southern University. To his left, Representative Willie Mae Barron, and to his right, Representative Will

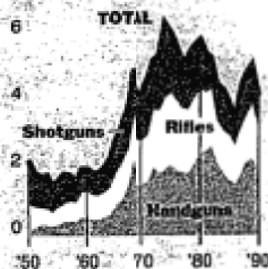
200 Million Guns

First article of a series.



New firearms available each year in the U.S. Includes domestic production plus net imports.

8 million



Source: Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

A Bitter, Frenzied Race to Super

By ROBIN TONER
(Special to The New York Times)

MIAMI, March 7 — With his sharpest attacks yet, former Senator Paul E. Tsongas is battling to contain Gov. Bill Clinton as the race for the Democratic nomination roars toward the Southern-dominated primary extravaganza known as "Super Tuesday."

On the final weekend before 11 states vote in primaries and caucuses, producing more than a fifth of the pledged delegates to the Democratic National Convention, Mr. Tsongas and Mr. Clinton engaged in a bitter exchange over who was distorting whose record.

Mr. Tsongas, who arrived in Florida this weekend and accused Mr. Clinton of being "cynical and unprincipled," assailed the Arkansas Governor again today, even while acknowledging that it

A Scramble for Delegates by Clinton and Tsongas in Southern Contests

The exchange demonstrates the intensity of the Democratic race as it becomes a grueling, airport-to-airport, cross-country scramble for delegates. Mr. Tsongas says that he "just wants to be perceived as doing well" on Super Tuesday, and his aides talk of a "silver medal" strategy in the region. But he clearly would like to rattle Mr. Clinton in his home turf, before the race moves north again to the critical states of Michigan and Illinois, which hold primaries on March 17.

Mr. Clinton, for his part, is trying to

made for the 11 primary Southern states with a regular work of politicians in that he has formidable

Dennis for Mr. Tsongas out with a strategy as he should region vote

Mr. Tsongas of his Massachusetts addition to aware and

Ethnic War in the Caucasus Finds New Depths of Carnage

By FRANCIS X. CLINES
Special to The New York Times

AGDAM, Azerbaijan, March 5 — As Hadjajev Hahlyevy washed the corpses of gunshot children and mutilated adults here at the valley mosque, all the despair and defeat of Azerbaijan seems at hand in his ministrations after four years of undeclared war with Armenia over the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

"I have cleaned 20 since Feb. 26," said the mosque worker, aghast as he wrapped for burial another decapitated male corpse fresh from the war between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, which appears to be setting new standards for carnage and vendetta. "Some are so broken, but we must bury them."

Azerbaijan appears to be losing the communal war as Nagorno-Karabakh boils over once again and the Armenian majority in the enclave continues to prevail in its campaign to wrest total self-government from Azerbaijan.

Government Collapses

The Azerbaijan Government in Baku was in a state of collapse this week because of the public's outrage over its inability to protect the scores of Azerbaijanis killed in an Armenian guerrilla attack on Khojaly, a city 10 miles southwest of here offering control of the airport for the enclave's capital, Stepanakert.

[Ayaz Mutalibov, President of Azerbaijan, resigned Friday under criticism of his ability to control the violence in Nagorno-Karabakh.]

Survivors who crawled through the woods to this town just outside the

enclave told of tank barrages, families destroyed by point-blank gunfire, of looting, rape and hostage taking. This is a plague of terrors heard as well from assaulted Armenian villages, but lately with heightened death tolls and heavier military assaults.

"We are defeated now," said Elshad Gulayev, an Azerbaijan nationalist guerrilla who roams the front line of Azerbaijan villages surrounding the enclave, where tank, rocket and artillery barrages have become common.

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could prove counterproductive in the fall. "We're only helping George Bush," Mr. Tsongas said. "But this is one Greek who fights back." Michael S. Dukakis, the 1988 Democratic nominee, was widely derided in the party for not countering Republican attacks.

Clinton Attacks Back

Mr. Clinton, for his part, knocked the charge of pandering back at Mr. Tsongas, asserting that he had shifted his position on Social Security cost-of-living adjustments to appeal to elderly voters in Florida. [Page 24.] South Carolina held a primary today, and Mr. Clinton won with 67 percent of the vote. President Bush won the Republican primary handily. [Page 26.]

There were also caucuses in Arizona and Wyoming, but the Democratic battle was centered here in Florida, second only to Texas in the number of delegates at stake on Tuesday. It is also the place where the former Senator from Massachusetts hopes to knock a major dent in Mr. Clinton's Southern base.

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Clintons Joined S. & L In an Ozark Real-Es

By JEFF GERTH
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 7 — Bill Clinton and his wife were business partners with the owner of a failing savings and loan association that was subject to state regulation early in his tenure as Governor of Arkansas, records show.

The partnership, a real estate joint venture that was developing land in the Ozarks, involved the Clintons and James B. McDougal, a former Clinton aide turned developer. It started in 1978, and at times money from Mr. McDougal's savings and loan was used to subsidize it. The corporation continues to this day, but does not appear to be active.

Mr. Clinton count of his interviews in account, it related. It records an others in / ing:

"Available most active corporation, a McDougal ing that the financial ri an unsusce ration boug tain vacati sell it in h Clintons ap money, so venture fal in on their done well.

"The Cl disagree ; Whitewater says that a were deliv sion. The C have disa about the answered ;

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C.I.A. Dug for Moles but Buried the Loyal

By DAVID JOHNSTON
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 7 — Three years ago the Central Intelligence Agency gave S. Peter Karlow a small bronze medal, a citation in a blue leatherette binder and a check for close to \$500,000. It was the agency's way of saying there had been a terrible mistake.

More than two decades earlier, the C.I.A. had falsely branded Mr. Karlow as a suspected mole, a spy within the agency's ranks. "I walked down the street and a flower pot fell off the roof and landed on me," Mr. Karlow, who is now 71 years old and lives in Northern California, said in an interview.

His case, and those of other agency employees who became victims of the agency's hunts for moles in the 1960's and early 1970's, are detailed in a book by David Wise, "Molehunt: The Secret Search For Traitors That Shattered the C.I.A." The book will be published by Random House on March 16.

Into Professional Exile

After 10 years of research and more than 650 interviews, Mr. Wise writes that the agency paid Mr. Karlow and two other former employees a total of more than \$700,000 to compensate them for having wrongly accused them of disloyalty. The payments were made under an obscure law that became known within the agency as the "Mole Relief Act."

Paul Garbler, the C.I.A.'s first station chief in Moscow, who also



Jim Wilson/The New York Times

S. Peter Karlow, who was mistakenly branded a spy by the C.I.A.

received a payment from the agency, spent years in professional exile after he was suspected of being a mole. Richard Kovich, who recruited Soviet spies for the C.I.A. until his career slid into limbo, also received compensation. Three other unidentified C.I.A. employees sought payments, but the agency

rejected their claims.

Mark Mansfield, a C.I.A. spokesman, said officials declined to comment on Mr. Wise's book, saying they had not yet seen it. But Mr. Mansfield added, "Several agency employees did receive compensa-

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INSIDE

Israeli Official Sain in Turkey

A car bomb killed an Israeli diplomat in Ankara, Turkey. Callers to a newspaper saying they represented two Islamic groups took responsibility for the slaying, one saying it was "an answer to the Israelis." Page 12.

Law Firm Tries to Settle

Near collapse, Kaye, Scholer, Fierman, Hays & Handler says efforts to freeze its assets have forced it to seek a deal in a case involving Lincoln Savings and Loan. Page 22.

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SHOULD AN UNLAWFUL GUN LOBBY MAY TIE \$28 MILLION FOR NYC schools metal detectors? Seymour M. Hersh, 1123 6th Ave. — A197T.

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