



NEWS RELEASE

Contra Costa County Supervisor
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 8, 2003

SUPERVISOR JOHN GIOIA SPEARHEADS EFFORT BANNING THE SALE OF .50 CALIBER RIFLES

Issue to be discussed at next Board of Supervisors meeting

What: Board of Supervisors meeting to discuss ordinance banning .50 Caliber Rifles
Where: 651 Pine Street
Martinez, CA
When: Tuesday, August 12, 2003
10:00 a.m.

MARTINEZ, Calif., Supervisor John Gioia is leading the effort to create an ordinance that would ban the sale of large caliber rifles in Contra Costa County. On **Tuesday, August 12th**, Supervisor Gioia will ask his colleagues to support his plan to create a local ordinance that would prohibit the sale of the deadly weapons.

“These weapons were originally designed for the military,” said Supervisor Gioia. “They can rip thru concrete walls, and pierce body armors.”

The .50 caliber sniper rifle has the capacity to hit targets from a distance of one mile and can cause damage from a distance of four miles. At 400 yards, it is powerful enough to tear thru eight inches of concrete. However, the .50 caliber sniper rifle is not more regulated than hunting rifles and less regulated than handguns. Many County residents worry the ease of possessing such powerful weapons are especially dangerous in Contra Costa County because it contains the highest concentration of refineries in Northern California.

“We have companies such as Chevron, General Chemical, and ConocoPhillips as our neighbors,” said Supervisor Gioia. “It’s critical we prohibit the sale of these extremely powerful weapons so our communities are kept safe from someone who many want to target our refineries.”

Creation of the ordinance already has the support of groups such as *Physicians for a Violence-Free Society*, *Million Mom March*, *Legal Community Against Violence*, and the *Trauma Foundation*.

Trauma Foundation policy director and Richmond resident Andres Soto applauds Supervisor Gioia for his effort. “Contra Costa County is once again demonstrating leadership in efforts to protect residents,” said Soto.

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2-2-2-2 SUPERVISOR GIOIA LEADS EFFORT TO BAN SALE OF .50 CALIBER RIFLES

This past May, federal agents arrested Steven Virgil Merenkov, 47, of Walnut Creek after finding a box of pipe bombs allegedly mailed to himself. Authorities also found a cache of 40 weapons including 27 assault weapons, ammunition, explosives, and two grenade launchers at his home.

Once passed, Contra Costa County would be the second jurisdiction in California to prohibit the sale of .50 caliber rifles. Two months ago, the City of Los Angeles passed the state's first local ordinance to prohibit the sale of large caliber firearms.

Soto said he is talking to lawmakers in San Francisco, San Jose, and Santa Cruz to pass similar ordinances.

There is currently a statewide effort to limit the manufacture, import, sale, and ownership of .50 caliber rifles. However, AB 50 (Koertz) failed passage in the Senate Public Safety Committee on July 8, 2003.

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