

**Opening Statement
Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings**

**Hearing on “Firearms and Munitions at Risk:
Examining Inadequate Safeguards”**

July 6, 2016

Last month, a deranged terrorist walked into a nightclub in Orlando and shot down 49 innocent people in one of the most devastating gun massacres in our nation’s history. To say that our prayers go out to the families—while certainly true—is simply no longer enough. We cannot ignore them. We must act. And we must act now.

Every year, about 12,000 Americans are killed with guns. In my own hometown of Baltimore, more than 300 people were killed last year alone in shooting-related homicides.

We—as the elected officials here in Congress—should be able to agree that suspected terrorists should not have guns. The American people already agree. Law abiding gun owners agree. People who support the Second Amendment agree.

But this proposal is opposed by the NRA, the gun manufacturers, and Republican leaders who will not allow a vote to close this terrorist loophole.

Instead, Speaker Ryan announced plans this week to call up a phony bill endorsed by the NRA that continues to allow suspected terrorists to buy guns unless there is an arrest warrant against them. And now even that proposal apparently has been put on hold.

Let me ask you this: if we ban a suspected terrorist from boarding a plane, why in the world would we let him walk across the street into a gun store and stock up on military-style assault weapons within 72 hours? It makes absolutely no sense. But that’s what this NRA bill would do.

We here in Congress should also be able to agree that no convicted felons should have guns. If people are convicted of violent crimes, they should not be allowed to buy semi-automatic firearms, .50-caliber sniper rifles, or other types of deadly weapons.

Having a background check before any gun changes hands is a common-sense proposal supported by a wide majority of Americans, including law-abiding gun owners and strong supporters of the Second Amendment. But again, the NRA, gun manufacturers, and their Republican supporters in Congress prevent this from happening.

We here in Congress should be able to support a federal law against illegal gun trafficking by drug cartels or other criminal organizations. We heard first-hand from law enforcement agents testifying at this very witness table that the current statute is just a slap on the wrist. They called it a toothless paperwork violation.

That is why Congresswoman Maloney and I introduced the Gun Trafficking Prevention Act. This bipartisan bill is co-sponsored by Republicans including Patrick Meehan, Michael Fitzpatrick, Scott Rigell, and Peter King. It gained more than 100 co-sponsors and was supported by law enforcement organizations across the country.

But that was more than three years ago. Since then, there has not been one hearing, one markup, or one vote on our bipartisan proposal. Our bill, like so many other common-sense proposals, has been gathering dust because Republican leaders refuse to allow a vote.

Of course, federal agencies must safeguard their firearms, which is the subject of today's hearing. Everyone on this panel agrees with that. Last year, a young woman named Kate Steinle was killed by a convicted felon with a duty pistol that belonged to a Ranger from the Bureau of Land Management. That gun was stolen from his vehicle a week earlier.

So of course, it is appropriate to examine crimes committed with federal firearms that are lost or stolen and to identify improvements in the way federal agencies keep their inventories. But we can no longer ignore the far more massive carnage caused by non-federal guns every single day in this country.

The bottom line is that we do not want any suspected terrorist to get a gun, we do not want any felon to get a gun, and we do not want any trafficking organization to get a gun. But there has been no credible action by Republican leaders to address these issues.

The American people want us to move beyond the false choice of no guns at all or the wild west of firearms on demand. We can and must make common-sense improvements on a bipartisan basis, and it is our solemn duty to act now to prevent the further loss of life of our own citizens.

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