

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 26, 2018

The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street N.W.  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We write with great alarm regarding the decision last month by the Department of Justice (DOJ) to settle the lawsuit brought against the State Department by the gun rights advocacy groups Defense Distributed and the Second Amendment Foundation. We urge the State Department not to allow Defense Distributed to publish online blueprints for undetectable, three-dimensional (“3-D”) printable firearms.

In 2015, Defense Distributed and the Second Amendment Foundation sued the State Department, challenging the State Department’s determination that Defense Distributed violated federal export controls and its demand that Defense Distributed remove from the internet its blueprints for 3-D printable firearms. Throughout the course of the lawsuit, the government maintained that its position was well-supported under the Arms Export Control Act and the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR). Indeed, as recently as April 2018, the Trump administration filed a motion to dismiss the suit in which it argued that “[w]hatever informational value there may be in the process by which 3-D printing occurs,” Defense Distributed’s Computer Aided Design files “are indispensable to a [3-D] printing process used to create firearms and their components,” and “are also functional, directly facilitate the manufacture of weapons, and may properly be regulated for export.”<sup>1</sup>

Despite the court’s twice siding with the government’s position, in a stunning reversal of course last month, DOJ settled the suit and agreed to allow for the public release of Defense Distributed’s 3-D firearm printing blueprints in any form. Specifically, the State Department has agreed to allow Defense Distributed to publish its blueprints by July 27, 2018 — by making a “temporary modification” of the United States Munitions List (USML) and granting Defense Distributed an “exemption” from ITAR regulations. The administration also made the puzzling decision to pay nearly \$40,000 in legal fees to the plaintiffs using taxpayer dollars.

This settlement is inconsistent with the administration’s previous position and is as dangerous as it is confounding. The settlement will allow these blueprints to be posted online for unlimited distribution to anyone — including felons and terrorists — both here in the United States and

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<sup>1</sup> *Defense Distributed v. U.S. Dep’t of State*, Case 1:15-cv-00372-RP, Defs.’ Mot. Dismiss Second Am. Compl., at 1 (W.D. Tex. Apr. 6, 2018).

abroad. It also sets a dangerous precedent in defending against challenges to other legally sound determinations made by the State Department under the Arms Export Control Act and ITAR.

Yesterday, in response to questioning by Senator Markey before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, you committed to reviewing the decision to allow Defense Distributed to publish its blueprints online. In accordance with this commitment, we ask that you suspend the special treatment given to Defense Distributed while you undertake this review.

In addition to suspending these actions, we ask that, prior to August 1, 2018, the State Department provide us with a written explanation and briefing on the reasoning behind the decision to settle this litigation in the manner it did. The American people have a right to know why their government agreed to such a dangerous outcome.

Specifically we request a response to the following questions:

1. Does the State Department no longer believe that the online publication of blueprints for the 3-D printing of firearms is a violation of federal export controls? If so, when did this reversal of opinion occur and why? Was there a change in the law or the facts that prompted this change? If so, please explain the change in either the law or facts that prompted the change.
2. On May 24, 2018, the State and Commerce Departments published proposed rules to amend Categories I, II, and III of the USML and transfer from the State Department to the Commerce Department oversight over export of certain firearms, ammunition, and related items. What role did the Defense Distributed litigation play in deciding to publish these proposed rules? What analysis, if any, did the State and Commerce Departments undertake to evaluate the potential risks of the proposed rules changes on export controls on the online publication of blueprints for 3-D printed firearms? If the State Department did evaluate the risks, what risks were identified? Please identify the individuals involved in that analysis.
3. If these proposed rules are finalized and jurisdiction over technical data related to the design, production, or use of semi-automatic or military-style firearms is transferred to the Commerce Department, the release into the public domain of instructions for printing 3-D firearms will be permissible. Does the State Department have concerns about the dangerous consequences of this rules change? Did the State Department make the Commerce Department aware of the litigation between it and Defense Distributed and the Second Amendment Foundation, the terms of the settlement, or the consequences of online publication of blueprints for 3-D printed firearms? If so, please identify to whom and how that information was conveyed.
4. Given the risks of the government abdicating control over the online publication of blueprints for 3-D printed firearms, why did the State Department agree to move forward with the rulemaking? How does the State Department plan to mitigate these risks?

5. The settlement agreement resolving the lawsuit brought by Defense Distributed and the Second Amendment Foundation obligates the State Department to “draft and fully pursue . . . the publication in the Federal Register of a notice of proposed rulemaking and final rule, revising USML Category I to the technical data that is the subject of the” litigation. Why did the State Department agree to this relief?
6. The settlement agreement resolving the lawsuit brought by Defense Distributed and the Second Amendment Foundation obligates the State Department, “while the above-referenced final rule is in development,” to announce “a temporary modification, consistent with the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), 22 C.F.R. § 126.2, of USML Category I to exclude the technical data that is the subject of the” litigation, and to publish the announcement on the website of the Directorate of Defense Trade Controls on or before July 27, 2018. Why did the State Department agree to this relief? What will this temporary modification likely entail? Will the State Department put any restrictions on the types of 3D technical data that can be released to the public without prior U.S. government approval, including types of firearms, 3D printing, and materials, among other possible issues? Why did the State Department fail to provide 30 days’ notice to the relevant congressional committees of its intention to remove Defense Distributed’s “technical data” from the USML, as required by 22 U.S.C. § 2278(f)(1)?
7. The settlement agreement resolving the lawsuit brought by Defense Distributed and the Second Amendment Foundation obligates the State Department to issue “a letter to Plaintiffs on or before July 27, 2018 signed by the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Defense Trade Controls, advising that [the 3-D printing files at issue in the litigation] are approved for public release (i.e., unlimited distribution) in any form and are exempt from the licensing requirements of ITAR because they satisfy the criteria of 22 C.F.R. § 125.4(b)(13).” Why did the State Department agree to this relief?
8. The settlement agreement resolving the lawsuit brought by Defense Distributed and the Second Amendment Foundation obligates the State Department to “acknowledg[e] and agree[] that the temporary modification of USML Category I permits any United States person . . . to access, discuss, use, reproduce, or otherwise benefit from the technical data that is the subject of the Action, and that the letter to Plaintiffs permits any such person to access, discuss, use, reproduce[,] or otherwise benefit from the” 3-D printing files at issue in the litigation. Why did the State Department agree to this relief?
9. The settlement agreement resolving the lawsuit brought by Defense Distributed and the Second Amendment Foundation obligates the State Department to pay the Plaintiffs \$39,581.00, reported to be for a portion of their legal fees. Please identify what funding source within the government this payment was drawn from. Additionally, please provide information regarding why the State Department agreed to this relief.

We are concerned about the immediate impact of publishing these 3-D gun blueprints: Once the State Department allows them to circulate freely online, the threats to U.S. and international security will be irreversibly increased. We urge you not to grant this special treatment to Defense

Distributed — but rather to postpone this action while you fulfill your commitment to review this decision, and until the above questions can be adequately addressed.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Should you have any questions about this request, please contact Callan Bruzzone of Senator Markey's staff at 202-224-2742.

Sincerely,



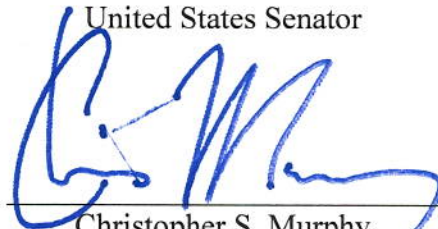
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



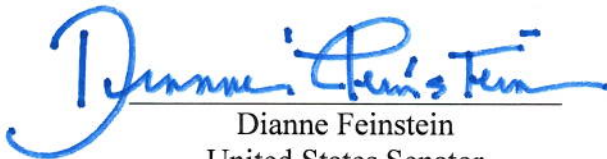
Bill Nelson  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
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