

States suing Trump administration, company over 3-D guns

July 30 2018, by Michael Rubinkam



In this May 10, 2013, file photo, Cody Wilson holds what he calls a Liberator pistol that was completely made on a 3-D-printer at his home in Austin, Texas. Eight states filed suit Monday, July 30, 2018, against the Trump administration over its decision to allow a Texas company to publish downloadable blueprints for a 3D-printed gun, contending the hard-to-trace plastic weapons are a boon to terrorists and criminals and threaten public safety. (Jay Janner/Austin American-Statesman via AP, File)

Eight states are filing suit against the Trump administration over its decision to allow a Texas company to publish downloadable blueprints

for a 3D-printed gun, contending the hard-to-trace plastic weapons are a boon to terrorists and criminals and threaten public safety.

The suit, filed Monday in Seattle, asks a judge to block the federal government's late-June settlement with Defense Distributed, which allowed the company to make the plans available online. Officials say that 1,000 people have already downloaded blueprints for AR-15 rifles.

"I have a question for the Trump Administration: Why are you allowing dangerous criminals easy access to weapons?" Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson, a Democrat, said in a statement Monday. "These downloadable guns are unregistered and very difficult to detect, even with metal detectors, and will be available to anyone regardless of age, mental health or criminal history."

Joining the suit were Democratic attorneys general in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Oregon, Maryland, New York and the District of Columbia. Separately, attorneys general in 21 states urged Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Attorney General Jeff Sessions on Monday to withdraw from the settlement with Defense Distributed, saying it "creates an imminent risk to public safety."

People can use the blueprints to manufacture a plastic gun using a 3D printer. But gun industry experts have expressed doubt that criminals would go to the trouble, since the printers needed to make the guns are very expensive, the guns themselves tend to disintegrate quickly and traditional firearms are easy to come by.



In this May 10, 2013, file photo, Cody Wilson, the founder of Defense Distributed, shows a plastic handgun made on a 3D-printer at his home in Austin, Texas. Eight states filed suit Monday, July 30, 2018, against the Trump administration over its decision to allow a Texas company to publish downloadable blueprints for a 3D-printed gun, contending the hard-to-trace plastic weapons are a boon to terrorists and criminals and threaten public safety. (Jay Janner/Austin American-Statesman via AP, File)

Cody Wilson, the founder of Defense Distributed, first published downloadable designs for a 3D-printed firearm in 2013. It was downloaded about 100,000 times until the State Department ordered him to cease, contending it violated federal export laws since some of the blueprints were downloaded by people outside the United States.

The State Department reversed course in late June, agreeing to allow Wilson to resume posting the blueprints. The files were published on Friday.

The company filed its own suit in Texas on Sunday, asserting that it's the victim of an "ideologically-fueled program of intimidation and harassment" that violates the company's First Amendment rights.

The company's attorney, Josh Blackman, called it an "easy case."

States are free to enact gun control measures, but "what they can't do is censor the speech of another citizen in another state, and they can't regulate the commerce of another citizen in another state when that commerce is authorized by a federal government license," Blackman said in an interview Monday. "It's a violation of the First Amendment, it's unconscionable and we're going to fight it to the very end."

Defense Distributed agreed to temporarily block Pennsylvania residents from downloading the plans after state officials went to federal court in Philadelphia on Sunday seeking an emergency order. The company said it has also blocked access to users in New Jersey and Los Angeles.

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