

US 'crypto-anarchist' sees 3D-printed guns as fundamental right

August 2 2018, by Kelly West



"No matter how badly I win or lose, you can download a gun from the internet," Cody Wilson told AFP at the headquarters of Defense Distributed, the company he runs out of a modest factory in Texas capital Austin

The US "crypto-anarchist" who caused panic this week by publishing online blueprints for 3D-printed firearms said Wednesday that whatever

the outcome of a legal battle, he has already succeeded in his political goal of spreading the designs far and wide.

A federal court judge blocked Texan Cody Wilson's website on Tuesday by issuing a temporary injunction.

Eight states had sued, arguing the blueprints could allow anyone—from a teen to a "lone wolf" gunman—to make untraceable, undetectable plastic weapons.

Wilson complied with the judge's order and shut down his Defcad website, which he wanted to turn into the "WikiLeaks of guns."

But by then, the blueprints he had posted—after President Donald Trump's administration granted him permission to publish in a settlement to end a five-year legal battle—had been downloaded thousands of times.

"No matter how badly I win or lose, you can download a gun from the internet," Wilson told AFP at the headquarters of Defense Distributed, the company he runs out of a modest factory in Texas capital Austin.

"This attempt by these authorities to go into court and stifle this information drove more people to the website to download it and spread it deeper into the internet."

Sporting a pair of gray jeans and a dark blue t-shirt, the 30-year-old with a close-cropped beard wouldn't appear out of place as a tech executive in Silicon Valley.

The ideology he says he is driven by is a defense of the US constitution's first and second amendments—the rights to free speech and to bear arms.

Wilson believes the intense media attention he generated cemented one of his principle goals: to use technology and the spread of gun-making information as a permanent bulwark against any future attempts at gun control in the US.



Worker J.C. Cotter installs an electronic package for a Ghost Gunner milling machine at the Defense Distributed factory in Austin, Texas

"We believe that the firearm itself, this implement of violence, is an essential component of force, of sovereignty," he says.

He concedes that what he has done, and still wants to do, "offends the conscience" of some people, but he says "it's never been illegal in this

country to make a firearm—and the way that you make it shouldn't affect that law."

Anarchist philosophy

Wilson ascribes to an anarchist philosophy that the free exchange of ideas on the internet—in its absolute form—is a check on government.

"It's a politics that predicted WikiLeaks, predicted Bitcoin, predicted anonymous mail and anonymous communications online," he says.

The law school dropout has dedicated the last five years of his life to the cause of unfettered online access to gun-making information.

"I'm a publisher. At the end of the day, I do many things, but the main thing that I strive to do is to take my information and put it on the internet," he says.

Defense Distributed, the company Wilson co-founded in 2013 and currently heads, is more than a publishing firm—it sells actual firearms products.

It has created a machine called the "Ghost Gunner," priced at \$2,000. Computer code operates the machine, which carves essential components of various firearms to create weapons without serial numbers.



Worker Caleb Tapp works on a motor assembly for a Ghost Gunner milling machine at the Defense Distributed factory in Austin, Texas

'Ghost guns'

Such weapons—called "ghost guns"—are already being made by those who can properly carve metal components. The "Ghost Gunner" takes away the need for advanced skill and creates untraceable weapons.

The issue is far from academic. The Los Angeles Police Department last month showcased a trove of "ghost" weapons it recovered from gang members. Law enforcement cannot trace these weapons if they are used to commit crimes.

That is why lawmakers, law enforcement personnel, gun control groups and even Trump himself expressed everything from panic to skepticism this week when Wilson started distributing blueprints online.

Those blueprints included his company's own creation, the "Liberator" plastic gun—a sidearm that resembles something seen on science fiction TV shows.

The potential impact of Wilson's publication was worldwide. Any country with uncensored access to the internet could see its [gun control](#) measures circumvented with a click of a mouse.

"It is immediately obvious to anyone who looks at this issue that 3D-printed guns are nothing short of a menace to society," said Avery Gardiner, co-president of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence.

"We will continue to do everything in our power to make sure that this temporary halt in publication becomes a permanent one," Gardiner said after the injunction.

Wilson also plans to fight, just as he unsuccessfully fought in the courts for five years.

The judge that ordered his website shut plans to hold a hearing on the states' lawsuit next week.

Wilson put out a call for donations to fund the legal challenge, but is aware that he may be facing a losing battle.

"I believe that duty demands that I continue to fight it," he said, while admitting that "I think I'll waste a lot of money."

Citation: US 'crypto-anarchist' sees 3D-printed guns as fundamental right (2018, August 2)
retrieved 21 September 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2018-08-crypto-anarchist-3d-printed-guns-fundamental.html>

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