

An average man's weapons of mass destruction

By Ricardo Torres-Cortez and Emma Cauthorn Friday, April 27, 2018 | 2 a.m.



Elaine Thompson / AP

A Ruger AR-15 semi-automatic rifle, center, the same model, though in gray rather than black, used by the shooter in a Texas church massacre, sits on display with other rifles in a gun shop Nov. 7, 2017, in Lynnwood, Wash.

When Metro Police officers broke their way into the 32nd-floor luxury suite after the Oct. 1 onslaught, they encountered an arsenal of rifles scattered on the floor, on chairs, on a table and on top of the white-sheeted beds.

By the numbers: Oct. 1

- 12 AR-15 style rifles were found in the two-room suite at Mandalay Bay. Each was fitted with a bump stock.
- 8 AR-10 style rifles were found in the suite

Stephen Paddock, the 64-year-old high-stakes gambler responsible for the most catastrophic mass shooting in modern U.S. history, amassed 55 firearms in the year before the massacre, officials have said. In the 30 years before that, he purchased 29.

Investigators found 22 firearms—12 which were AR-15 and eight AR-10-style rifles—in the suite.

The shooting also shined a spotlight on bump stocks—modification devices used by Paddock to accelerate a gun's shooting rate and simulate fully automatic fire. The company that invented and manufacturers the devices, Slide Fire Solutions, will cease production this week. It's unclear if this is a permanent or temporary stop. Three Las Vegas shooting victims filed a lawsuit against the company for negligence and are seeking class-action status. This comes on the heels of Dick's Sporting Goods ceasing sales of assault-style rifles and accessories, vowing to destroy the remaining inventory in its possession.

The deadly force of assault rifles

The AR-15, and similarly styled rifles, are some of America's most popular guns, with the National Shooting Sports Foundation estimating that 1.3 million such rifles are sold each year. While the argument that handguns cause many more fatalities than military-style rifles is true, the injuries sustained as a result of assault rifles are incomparable to those of handguns.

- 2 unused .308-caliber body-piercing rounds were found among the unused ammunition that authorities have said were sold to Paddock by Douglas Haig. The Arizona man was later charged with conspiracy and manufacturing body piercing ammunition without a license. Authorities have not said whether Paddock fired any body-piercing bullets on Oct. 1.

- 1,100 rounds: The number Lombardo said Paddock fired. It wasn't immediately clear how many of the weapons Paddock used.

- Investigators also found about 4,000 unused bullets in multiple loaded 40 and 100-round magazines for the AR-15's, as well as loaded 25-round magazines for the AR-10's. Clark County Sheriff Joe Lombardo has said that Paddock was capable of continuing the onslaught, but the sheriff has theorized that he stopped shooting when he felt police closing in. Hundreds more rounds were found in Paddock's vehicle and houses.

Velocity

Assault rifles fire at about three times the velocity of a typical handgun.

9-millimeter handguns fire between 700 and 1,100 feet per second.

The speed of sound travels at approximately 1125.33 feet per

Introduced as a combat weapon during the Vietnam War, AR-15s are the civilian version of the M16 rifles commonly used by the military to this day. Part of what makes these rifles ideal for warfare is the powerful speed with which the bullets travel. When looking at the nature of wounds caused by gunshots, the discrepancy between bullet velocity from handguns and assault rifles matters greatly.

second.
Assault rifles fire at about 2,800 to 3,000 feet per second.

Heather Sher, a trauma center radiologist who treated the victims at the Feb. 14 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, wrote an article published by The Atlantic comparing the wounds.

“Routine handgun injuries leave entry and exit wounds and linear tracks through the victim’s body that are roughly the size of the bullet,” Sher said. “The bullet from an AR-15 passes through the body like a cigarette boat traveling at maximum speed through a tiny canal. The tissue next to the bullet is elastic—moving away from the bullet like waves of water displaced by the boat—and then returns and settles back. This process is called cavitation; it leaves the displaced tissue damaged or killed. The high-velocity bullet causes a swath of tissue damage that extends several inches from its path. It does not have to actually hit an artery to damage it and cause catastrophic bleeding. Exit wounds can be the size of an orange.”

Talking to Wired, Peter Rhee, a trauma surgeon at the University of Arizona, likened the damage from an AR-15 to a grenade going off in the body.

U.S. murders in 2016

Of the 15,070 murders in the U.S. in 2016, 11,004 were from firearms. Of those:

- 7,105 were from handguns
- 374 were from rifles

- 262 were from shotguns
- 3,077 were from firearms of a type not divulged
- 186 were from other guns

Rifles used in other recent mass killings

- Dec. 14, 2012 in Newtown, Connecticut — Bushmaster XM-15 rifle and a .22-caliber Savage Mark II rifle killed 27
- Oct. 1, 2015 in Umpqua Community College, Oregon — Del-Ton rifle and multiple handguns killed nine.
- Dec. 2, 2015 in San Bernardino, California — Smith & Wesson M&P assault rifle, DPMS Panther Arms rifle, two handguns killed 14.
- June 12, 2016 in Orlando, Florida — Sig Sauer AR-15-style and a handgun killed 49.
- Nov. 5, 2017 in Sutherland Springs, Texas— Ruger AR-15-style rifle killed 26.
- Feb. 14, 2018 in Parkland, Texas — Smith & Wesson M&P semiautomatic rifle killed 17.

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