

Scary 3D Movie

**By Reg P. Wydeven
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This year marks the 25th anniversary of the movie ‘In the Line of Fire,’ which stars Clint Eastwood as retired Secret Service Agent Frank Horrigan. Frank was on duty when President Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. He comes out of retirement to protect the current President from Mitch Leary, portrayed by John Malkovich. Leary was a former CIA assassin who lost his job due to budget cuts and wants to take his revenge on the government.

Leary intends to assassinate the President at a fundraising dinner for his bid for reelection. He smuggles several pieces of a handmade plastic gun into the hotel, which doesn’t set off the metal detectors. Stashing the bullets in a rabbit’s foot keychain, Leary assembled the gun under the table and took his shot at the President, only to have Frank dive in front to take the bullet and save the day.

The idea of a plastic gun that could evade metal detectors was terrifying, but thankfully, it was only a movie. The outcome of a federal lawsuit, however, could make fiction a reality.

Last month, nineteen states and the District of Columbia filed a lawsuit and obtained a restraining order to prevent Cody Wilson, the owner of Defense Distributed, from posting blueprints for printing 3D weapons on the internet. Earlier this year, the U.S. State Department had tried to stop Wilson, a self-described “crypto-anarchist,” from posting the plans online. In April, however, the agency reached an agreement with the Austin, Texas-based company allowing it to post the plans.

So the states and DC sought the temporary injunction, and last week argued in front of the U.S. District Court Judge Robert Lasnik in Seattle for the injunction to be permanent. They fear that if the plans are disseminated online, people who are not legally allowed to possess guns, such as felons, will use them to make their own. In addition, because they have no serial numbers and are plastic, they are undetectable and untraceable, like John Malkovich’s gun, which is why they are sometimes referred to as “ghost guns.”

Wilson’s lawyers argued that many of the plans can already be found online and a 1988 federal law already prohibits the manufacture and possession of plastic guns. Wilson added that “governments should live in fear of their citizenry.”

The State Department actually opposed the states’ request – not because it is in favor of blueprints being online, but because it claims the issue is outside their jurisdiction. According to the agency, they regulate the export of weapons, not guns manufactured and distributed domestically. They feel this is the individual states’ responsibility.

On Monday, Judge Lasnik did decide to extend the injunction preventing Wilson from disseminating the plans online. His 25-page decision reads, in part, that “the Court finds that the irreparable burdens on the private defendants’ First Amendment rights are dwarfed by the irreparable harms the States are likely to suffer if the existing restrictions are withdrawn and that, overall, the public interest strongly supports maintaining the status quo through the pendency of this litigation.”

Wisconsin did not participate in the suit. Attorney General Brad Schimel claims he was not asked to join the effort. According to Schimel, “We are studying the issue of (3D) guns and this lawsuit,” but when it comes to firearms, “we must always balance safety with the protection of the First and Second Amendment rights of citizens.”

While Lasnik extended the injunction, he found the suit “frustrating,” for he feels it’s either the legislative or executive branch’s responsibility to decide this issue. I guess we’ll have to wait to see if they weigh in.

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