



# Obama to Seek New Assault Weapons Ban

The Ban Expired in 2004 During the Bush Administration.

By JASON RYAN

**WASHINGTON, Feb. 25, 2009—**

The Obama administration will seek to reinstate the assault weapons ban that expired in 2004 during the Bush administration, Attorney General [Eric Holder](#) said today.

"As President Obama indicated during the campaign, there are just a few gun-related changes that we would like to make, and among them would be to reinstitute the ban on the sale of assault weapons," Holder told reporters.

Holder said that putting the ban back in place would not only be a positive move by the United States, it would help cut down on the flow of guns going across the border into Mexico, which is struggling with heavy violence among drug cartels along the border.

"I think that will have a positive impact in Mexico, at a minimum." Holder said at a news conference on the [arrest of more than 700 people](#) in a drug enforcement crackdown on Mexican drug cartels operating in the U.S.

Mexican government officials have complained that the availability of [sophisticated guns from the United States](#) have emboldened drug traffickers to fight over access routes into the U.S.

A State Department travel warning issued Feb. 20, 2009, reflected government concerns about the violence.

"Some recent Mexican army and police confrontations with drug cartels have resembled small-unit combat, with cartels employing automatic weapons and grenades," the warning said. "Large firefights have taken place in many towns and cities across Mexico, but most recently in northern Mexico, including Tijuana, Chihuahua City and Ciudad Juarez."

At the news conference today, Holder described his discussions with his Mexican counterpart about the recent spike in violence.

"I met yesterday with Attorney General Medina Mora of Mexico, and we discussed the unprecedented levels of violence his country is facing because of their enforcement efforts," he said.

Holder declined to offer any time frame for the reimplementation of the assault weapons ban, however.

"It's something, as I said, that the president talked about during the campaign," he said. "There are obviously a number of things that are -- that have been taking up a substantial amount of his time, and so, I'm not sure exactly what the sequencing will be."

In a brief interview with ABC News, Wayne LaPierre, president of the National Rifle Association, said, "I think there are a lot of Democrats on Capitol Hill cringing at Eric Holder's comments right now."

During his confirmation hearing, Holder told the Senate Judiciary Committee about other gun control measures the Obama administration may consider.

"I think closing the gun show loophole, the banning of cop-killer bullets and I also think that making the assault weapons ban permanent, would be something that would be permitted under Heller," Holder said, referring to the Supreme Court ruling in Washington, D.C. v. Heller, which asserted the Second Amendment as an individual's right to own a weapon.

The Assault Weapons Ban signed into law by President Clinton in 1994 banned 19 types of semi-automatic military-style guns and ammunition clips with more than 10 rounds.

"A semi-automatic is a quintessential self-defense firearm owned by American citizens in this country," LaPierre said. "I think it is clearly covered under Heller and it's clearly, I think, protected by the Constitution."

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