

Kathy Sullivan: The NRA stirs up fears by not telling the truth

BY KATHY SULLIVAN

Does the leadership of the National Rifle Association believe what it says, or does it just cynically and intentionally lie?

It wasn't the NRA's ridiculous response to the Newtown massacre that first had me wondering. I am on an NRA call list, probably because I used to have a New Hampshire Fish and Game license. Before the presidential election, the NRA called to say how important it was to "defeat Obama" (the NRA has as hard a time saying "President Obama" as the devil has dipping his hand into holy water). The message raved on an Obama/United Nations plan to take away our guns.

The United Nations rant had to do with a proposed treaty that would regulate the global arms trade. In July of last year, UN delegates met but were unable to reach a consensus on the treaty, in part due to opposition from Egypt, Syria, North Korea, Iran and Algeria. In addition, the United States and Russia, both major arms producers, said more time was needed to clarify and resolve issues. Since then, the UN General Assembly, including the United States, has voted to move forward with a final round of negotiations this coming March.

That the NRA agrees with Iran and North Korea is a hint that maybe it is not on the side of the angels here. The treaty's purpose is to regulate the international arms trade and eradicate the illegal arms trade. It does not limit gun sales and gun ownership within the borders of the United States. In fact, the text of the proposed treaty reaffirms the sovereign right of countries to regulate and control transfers of conventional arms within their territories, pursuant to their own constitutional systems.

What it requires is an assessment of whether a proposed sale of arms outside a country could commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law or human rights law, or be used to commit or facilitate an offense relating to terrorism. It is common sense for countries to assess whether a sale by a gun manufacturer to, say, people in Iran or some other country that harbors

terrorists might be a bad idea. Unless you are the NRA leadership!

The NRA is making false claims about the treaty, such as that treaty mandates gun owner registration. In the NRA's version, the treaty requires that signatories "shall maintain national records. Such records may contain end users." Those ten words misleadingly condense two paragraphs.

The actual language states: "Each [country] shall maintain national records, in accordance with its national laws and regulations, of the export authorizations or actual exports of the conventional arms under the scope of this Treaty and, where feasible, details of those conventional arms transferred to their territory as the final destination or that are authorized to transit or transship territory under its jurisdiction."

The next paragraph describes the information that records may, not shall, contain, including the countries to which the arms are being transferred, the amount and model, and end users, as appropriate. The NRA leadership is not telling the truth in saying that this treaty requires records of "end users."

Why is the NRA opposing this treaty when it will not affect internal gun sales and gun ownership? It may be because of the gun manufacturers who bankroll the NRA. According to the International Herald Tribune, American gun exports totaled \$336.5 million in 2011.

The NRA's recent ad attacking Barack Obama for his proposals on gun safety also skirted the truth. Before the President announced his proposals, the NRA leadership approved this disgusting ad accusing him of being an "elitist hypocrite" because he was skeptical of putting armed guards in schools, while his two children have armed guards. (By the way, the guards at the school Obama's children attend are not armed, it turns out.)

What the President actually said was that he was skeptical that the only answer was putting more guns in schools. When he subsequently issued his

proposal, it included more funds for mental health, more help for schools to enhance their safety (including hiring more police officers) and a ban on military-style assault weapons. Yet the NRA leadership, in another overheated, truth-defying statement, claimed that the President was "attacking firearms and ignoring children." Hogwash, malarkey and lies, all based on the false premise that the President wants to take your guns away.

It is time for all of us to recognize that the Second Amendment does not require unlimited sales of guns to countries where terrorists are harbored, or the unlimited sale of battlefield weapons and high capacity-magazines in the United States. It is beyond time to stop the NRA's veto power over sensible gun safety legislation.

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