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—Sheriff Robert Winter

## What Other Law Enforcement Officials Say

**San Jose Police Chief Joseph McNamara** has called for a ban on automatic weapons, Teflon-coated bullets that can pierce bullet-proof vests and plastic handguns that can evade detection by metal detectors. He also advocates a waiting period for those purchasing handguns.

We asked several of his colleagues to comment on these issues and McNamara's crusade for stricter gun laws. Their answers follow.

—Hal Plotkin

**Sheriff Robert Winter:**

*On handgun control:* "I try to maintain a middle-of-the-road position. I see how handguns can be useful, but I see no reasonable need for automatic weapons, Teflon bullets or plastic guns. We should look at these things unemotionally and without hysteria, on a weapon-by-weapon basis.

I don't favor the wholesale registration of handguns though, because it won't do any good. The legal weapons will be registered, but the illegal ones won't be. The worry is that if the government compiles a list of all gun owners, then one day the government—I don't think ours would do it—but they then might in some way invade the privacy of these people.

A more productive approach

would be to liberalize procedures to allow easy searches of those who have been convicted of prior offenses involving handguns, even after the parole period. Sentence enhancements for those who use guns in committing a crime are also a good idea. We might want to consider similar sentence enhancements for those using some modified weapons as well.

*On Chief McNamara:* I think he does a good job. He's got a point of view. It's not mine—but I think he represents the City of San Jose very well.

**Santa Clara Police Chief Frank Vasquez:**

*On handgun control:* Honestly, I don't understand all the rhetoric. California currently has some pretty good legislation on these matters. Section 12320 of the State Code already prohibits sale of any armor-piercing bullets, and I would think that the Teflon-coated bullets are covered by that. There is also a 15-day waiting period to buy weapons.

In a way, it's academic to talk about new laws in this area when we are unable to enforce the laws we already have. Where are we going to put the violators?

*On Chief McNamara:* I admire him for taking on a cause that he

believes so strongly in. I agree with his stance on plastic guns, but I've never seen a plastic gun. Joe has a very high reputation among his colleagues. But some of us are wondering, because it sometimes seems that the laws he wants already exist here. Perhaps they don't exist in other parts of the country—maybe that's what this is about—but they do exist here. I do agree, however, that there is no need for semi-automatic weapons. We ought to do something about them.

**Los Gatos Police Chief Larry Todd:**

*On handgun control:* "My concern is that the public understand that when we talk about handgun control, we are not talking about taking all handguns away from all people at all times. But the weapons designed strictly for assault should be outlawed.

We've seen fit in California to make possession of brass knuckles a felony but a concealed weapon is only a misdemeanor. I think there should be legislation to severely restrict access to handguns. It's amazing that in some communities toy guns have been prohibited while certain groups have been able to restrict similar legislation for the real guns.

There is no logical reason to need weapons designed for warfare. They

don't belong in our communities. By and large, the people who possess these weapons are involved in antisocial behavior to begin with.

*On Chief McNamara:* I tell you one thing, if the NRA is attacking Joe McNamara, there are a lot of California chiefs of police who will stand side-by-side with him. I personally support him. He's an outstanding leader.

**Milpitas Police Chief Frank Acosta:**

*On handgun control:* "I believe there is a need for stricter legislation. We currently do have laws, but the criminal justice system falls on its face when it comes to enforcing those laws. It makes no sense, for instance, that it is a felony to carry a dagger, while carrying a concealed handgun is only a misdemeanor. But even with a new law, if the courts don't follow through and if there is no place in the jails, then what good will a new law do?"

I am very concerned about semi-automatic weapons and Teflon-coated bullets. If these weapons fall into the wrong hands it would be terrible.

*On Chief McNamara:* Joe is very well-respected as both a colleague and a peer. He takes on issues on a local and national level and I admire

his leadership. He is very bright and has earned the respect of his colleagues.

**Campbell Police Chief Jim Cost:**

*On handgun control:* "I think this whole topic needs to be reviewed. It's hard to understand why anyone would want a Teflon bullet.

Honestly, I don't understand the NRA position. I used to belong to the NRA. I even have a plaque from them I earned for being one of the top shooters in the state. But some time ago, it seemed the whole twist of the NRA shifted. They started regularly attacking the [Bureau of] Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms people and one day I said 'wait a minute here, I'm a cop' and so I quit the NRA.

I was a hunter and I've enjoyed shooting, but we have to be willing to look at these weapons and ask 'what are they for?' As a gun collector, I'd be willing to give up the right to go out and buy an Uzi. There is just no justification for them.

*On Chief McNamara:* I think Joe McNamara is on the right track. He's very well-regarded in the law enforcement community and I'm just sorry the NRA has taken him on. But it does tell me that I made the right decision when I quit the NRA.