

If Firing An AR-15 Scares You, Maybe You're A Sissy

If you can't fire a commonplace sporting rifle without feeling 'irritable and jittery' for hours afterwards, that's a problem with you, not with the gun.

The horrific terrorist attack in Orlando has inspired a lot of commentary from the punditry, but the most outlandish thus far has to be Gersh Kuntzman's personal account in the *New York Daily News* of [handling and firing an AR-15 at a Philadelphia shooting range](#). Kuntzman wanted to shoot the rifle "to better understand the firepower of military-style assault weapons and, hopefully, explain their appeal to gun lovers."

This is actually a rather commendable exercise: instead of merely pontificating about a firearm, Kuntzman undertook to use one, test it out, and understand it. Yet Kuntzman did not find the experience to his liking: "mostly," he writes, "I was just terrified."

What follows reads less like a journalistic exposé and more like a Civil War battlefield diary written by a terrified 17-year-old conscript. Firing the AR-15, Kuntzman writes, was "humbling and deafening"; the recoil "bruised [his] shoulder"; the shell casings "disoriented" him; the "smell of sulfur and destruction" made him "sick"; the "explosions" (which were "loud like a bomb") gave him "a temporary form of PTSD." For a long while after firing the gun, he was "anxious and irritable." Firing the AR-15, he wrote, "felt...like a bazooka."

In [a follow-up column](#), Kuntzman reiterated: the "sheer power" of the AR-15 was "horrifying." The noise produced by the gun was "deafening," "anxiety provoking." After firing the gun, he was "irritable and jittery." The weapon "scared the crap out of [him]," and moreover, "It should scare the crap out of all

of you, too.” Again he claims: “To me, [the AR-15] felt like a bazooka.” And he says his experience with the AR-15 “bruised [him], body and spirit.”

Here is a counter-proposal: Gersh Kuntzman is a sissy.

An Aversion to Guns Is One Thing

I do not use that word as a commentary on Kuntzman’s character or his integrity, neither of which I know much about. Nor do I use it to criticize or denigrate his masculinity; one does not need to enjoy firing a gun in order to be a man. As *National Review*’s [Charlie Cooke points out](#), someone’s dislike of the shooting range is “not a reaction that deserves anyone’s opprobrium.” I wholeheartedly agree. I have friends and family who don’t like firearms—they don’t enjoy the noise, the smell, the kick of the gun—and there’s really nothing wrong with that.

Yet the sheer hyperbolic excess in which Kuntzman engages is not an example of someone who simply dislikes guns. The claim that firing a run-of-the-mill rifle at a shooting range can give a person “PTSD,” that it can make one “anxious and irritable,” that it gives one “anxiety,” that it is a “horrifying” weapon: this is not merely the position of a person who would prefer not to be at a firing range. It is, rather, the position of a grown man who has willingly and consciously chosen to be piss-in-his-pants terrified of a weapon that isn’t really that frightening.

An aversion to guns is one thing. Claiming that a .223 caliber weapon “felt like a bazooka” is another thing entirely. It shows a deliberate immaturity and an intentional desire to be comically afraid of something that is, all other things being equal, not scary.

If you can’t fire a rather commonplace small-caliber semi-automatic sporting rifle without feeling “irritable and jittery” for hours afterwards, that’s a problem with you, not with the gun.

Trying Out a Gun Once Doesn't Mean You Know Anything

Kuntzman is not merely an intentional sissy, he is also a deeply unserious journalist who shouldn't be commenting on firearms even apart from his comical reaction to the AR-15. He originally claimed the AR-15 was a "tactical machine gun," an embarrassing error he ended up [stealth-editing out of the piece](#). (He has actually stealth-edited the piece several times to cover up some embarrassing errors and statements—see the screenshot of his article as the first item below, compared with a screenshot of [an earlier quote from TownHall.com](#).)

He also believes the Second Amendment only protects one's right to bear arms in the context of a militia, a position that [literally makes no sense at all](#). He asks whether we would tolerate private ownership of nuclear warheads under the Second Amendment, a question that does not even bother to engage with the legal and practical definitions of the word "arms." He also trivializes the experience of soldiers who have spent time in battle and suffer from *actual* PTSD—the real kind, not the kind felt by willfully faint-hearted New York commentary writers.

If the *New York Daily News* can't find a more qualified, less cowardly person to write about guns, it should cease publishing about the topic altogether. I am sure Kuntzman, for one, would prefer it that way. If he is ever again forced to reckon with the "horrifying, menacing and very, very loud" AR-15, he may start having flashbacks to the brutal few hours he spent at the Double Tap Shooting Range and Gun Shop. He might even get "irritable" again. The *horror*.

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