



U.S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco,  
Firearms and Explosives

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The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) is committed to full transparency in the classification of firearms. This statement addresses the circumstances and legal landscape surrounding Franklin Armory's "Antithesis" firearms.

In its original configuration as presented to ATF, the FAI-15 Antithesis was an AR-type rifle chambered to fire both .45 Long Colt and .410 caliber shotgun shell ammunition. The weapon was submitted with a 14.5" barrel and a 33" overall length. In December 2021, ATF classified the weapon as a "short-barreled rifle" under the Gun Control Act (18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(8)) and a "firearm" under the National Firearms Act (26 U.S.C. § 5845(a)(3)).

On February 18, 2025, a federal district court vacated ATF's classification that the Antithesis was a "short-barreled rifle." The court held that the Antithesis did not legally constitute a "rifle" because it was designed and intended to fire both single-projectile (.45 Long Colt) and multi-projectile (.410 caliber shotshell) ammunition. *See* 26 U.S.C. § 5845(c) ("The term 'rifle' means a weapon designed or redesigned, made or remade, and intended to be fired from the shoulder and designed or redesigned and made or remade to use the energy of the explosive in a fixed cartridge to fire only a single projectile through a rifled bore for each single pull of the trigger . . ."); *see also* 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(7) (similar).

With new leadership in place, on July 8, 2025, ATF entered into a settlement agreement with Franklin Armory that accepted the district court's ruling and classified the Antithesis as a "firearm" under the Gun Control Act (but not a "rifle" under the Gun Control Act or a "firearm" under the National Firearms Act (26 U.S.C. § 5845(a)(3))). The settlement agreement applied to the FAI-15 Antithesis in the caliber and configuration that had been submitted to ATF.

On August 28, 2025, Franklin Armory submitted to ATF for classification a 5.56mm AR-type rifle under the "Antithesis" brand. This rifle had a barrel chambered for 5.56mm NATO, with standard rifling. The barrel was 7.5 inches long, with a 1:9 twist. Thus, the rifle was the same as other standard AR-type short-barreled rifles. Franklin Armory also submitted a sample of an exotic prototype 5.56mm caliber sabot ammunition that housed multiple smaller projectiles in a casing. That ammunition could be used not only with the rifle Franklin Armory submitted on August 28, but also with every other firearm chambered in 5.56mm NATO. Pointing to the July 2025 settlement agreement, Franklin Armory asserted that because its new submission could shoot a multiple-projectile load, it was not a "rifle" under the Gun Control Act or the National Firearms Act. ATF received Franklin Armory's submission and began the usual classification process by reviewing the firearm and associated documents sent by Franklin Armory.

Before ATF reached a classification, Franklin Armory proceeded to advertise online and sell an Antithesis-branded rifle in at least three different models, all chambered in 5.56mm NATO with standard rifling, varying in barrel length. The models featured, respectively, a 12” barrel, a 12.5” barrel, and a 7.5” barrel. Like the rifle Franklin Armory submitted to ATF for classification in August 2025, all three Antithesis-branded firearms are standard AR-type rifles, no different from other short-barreled AR-type rifles sold by other manufacturers. Unlike the FAI-15 Antithesis chambered in .410/.45 Long Colt—the subject of the July settlement agreement—these weapons were not designed to shoot both single-projectile ammunition and shotgun shells. Franklin Armory’s contemporaneous submission of an exotic 5.56mm ammunition that could be used in any 5.56mm chambered rifle reflects, at most, the design of new ammunition. It says nothing about the design of the *rifle* Franklin submitted in August—the sole relevant question under the statutory language. That rifle, again, features materially the same design as other standard AR-type rifles except in one respect—its barrel length.

ATF’s position has not traditionally been that the existence of an exotic multiple projectile load in a particular rifle caliber legally converts a statutory “rifle” into a non-rifle GCA “firearm.” If that were true, the existence of such ammunition would render the concept of a statutory rifle a null set. That is not only a legal absurdity, but also—even if correct—could have unintended legal consequences for purchasers of AR-type rifles. *See, e.g.*, 18 U.S.C. § 922(b)(1) (establishing twenty-one years as the minimum age to purchase a firearm other than a rifle and shotgun). As ATF’s review has established, there is no material difference between Franklin Armory’s August submission and other short-barreled AR-type rifles on the market—which are classified as short-barreled rifles. And while ATF recognizes that Congress and the public are debating whether federal law should subject short-barreled rifles to National Firearm Act controls, there is no legal or factual basis to treat Franklin Armory’s products differently from substantially similar AR-type rifles made by other manufacturers.

Unfortunately, Franklin Armory falsely represented to consumers that these weapons are not “short-barreled rifles” and that they could be transferred without complying with the National Firearms Act. In doing so, Franklin Armory was putting consumers in legal jeopardy because they could be subject to prosecution by any future administration. Among the many objections raised against ATF in the past, one of the most serious is that ATF has a poor history with classifying firearms accurately, transparently, and *consistently*, depriving manufacturers, dealers, and consumers of the predictability they deserve. ATF is committed to ensuring that all firearm manufacturers face a consistently applied and legally correct regulatory framework. Accordingly, ATF instructed Franklin Armory that it needed to retrieve the weapons it had previously sold. ATF also provided Franklin Armory with a reasonable path forward by properly registering the weapons under the National Firearms Act and transferring them according to the requirements of the Gun Control Act and National Firearms Act.