

MECHANISM FOR CONTAINING THE PRESSURE OF DISCHARGE AT THE REAR OF THE CHAMBER

(A discussion document)

1] Policing and Crime Act 2017

The amendment to section 57 of the Firearms Act 1968 (the meaning of “Firearm” etc)

2] “(1D) For the purposes of subsection (1)(c), each of the following items is a relevant component part in relation to a lethal barrelled weapon or a prohibited weapon

.. (c) a breech block, **bolt or other mechanism for containing the pressure of discharge at the rear of the chamber.**

but only where the item is capable of being used as a part of a lethal barrelled weapon or a prohibited weapon.”

3] The key words “*mechanism for containing the pressure*”

4] This is not saying “*mechanism that contains the pressure*”

5] An interpretation for consideration is as follows:

A mechanism is a system of parts working together in a machine (Oxford dictionary).

Their function in this case is to be directly involved in containing the pressure, but does not necessarily include the component that actually contains the pressure.

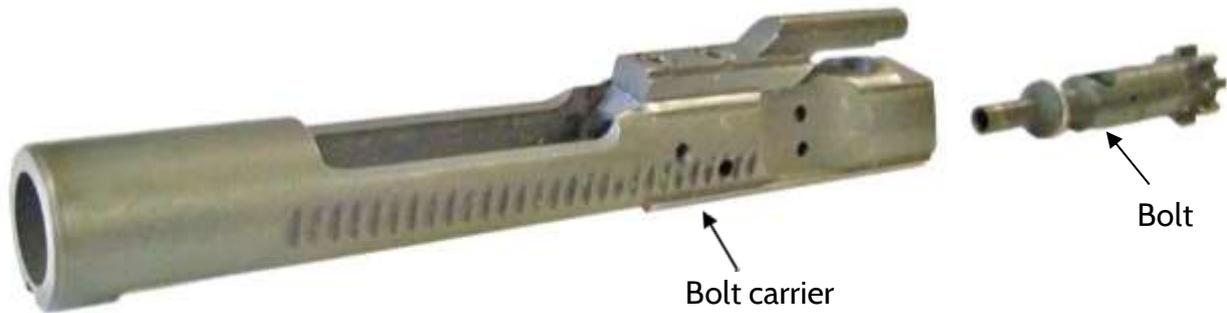
6] The question when it comes to classification will be the test: where does “*the mechanism*” begin and end.

7] The function of carriers in many firearms mechanisms is to bring the bolt or breech face into battery, these components could be considered “*or other mechanism for containing the pressure*” or actually part of the bolt or breech block mechanism itself.

8] Note: do not use the presence of a Proof mark as evidence that the component actually contains pressure or has the pressure of firing impinging on it directly!

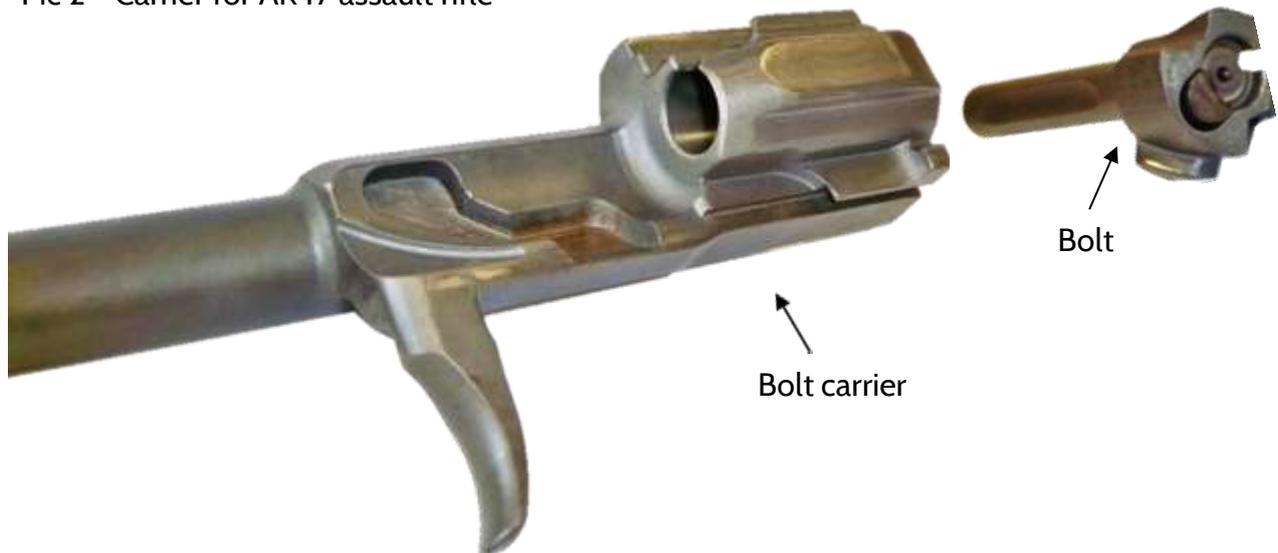
9] Below are some examples that may be considered “*mechanisms*”

Pic 1 Carrier for M4 assault rifle



10] The carrier's function is to move forward under spring pressure and rotate the bolt, which engages with the locking lugs in the barrel. When the bolt is locked into position (held by the carrier) the bolt will contain the pressure of firing "at the rear of the chamber." Some of the pressure of firing is tapped off via the gas block and used to move the carrier to the rear, thus unlocking the bolt, this function occurring after the pressure of firing has dropped to an acceptable level, and the bullet has exited the muzzle.

Pic 2 Carrier for AK47 assault rifle



11] The carrier's function is to move forward under spring pressure and rotate the bolt, which engages with the locking lugs in the receiver. When the bolt is locked into position (held by the carrier) the bolt will contain the pressure of firing "at the rear of the chamber." Some of the pressure of firing is tapped off via the gas block and used to move the carrier to the rear, thus unlocking the bolt, this function occurring after the pressure of firing has dropped to an acceptable level, and the bullet has exited the muzzle.

Pic 3



12] The carrier's function is to move forward under spring pressure and lower the rear of the bolt which locks into position against the locking shoulder. With the bolt held in this position it is able to contain and withstand the pressure of firing. Some pressure of firing is tapped off via the gas block and used to move the carrier to the rear, this raises the rear of the bolt from the locking shoulder and therefore unlocks the bolt, this function occurring after the pressure of firing has dropped to an acceptable level, and the bullet has exited the muzzle.

13] The above examples may obviously be "*mechanisms for containing the pressure of discharge at the rear of the chamber*", if this meets with your opinion, the carriers function being to bring the bolt into battery.

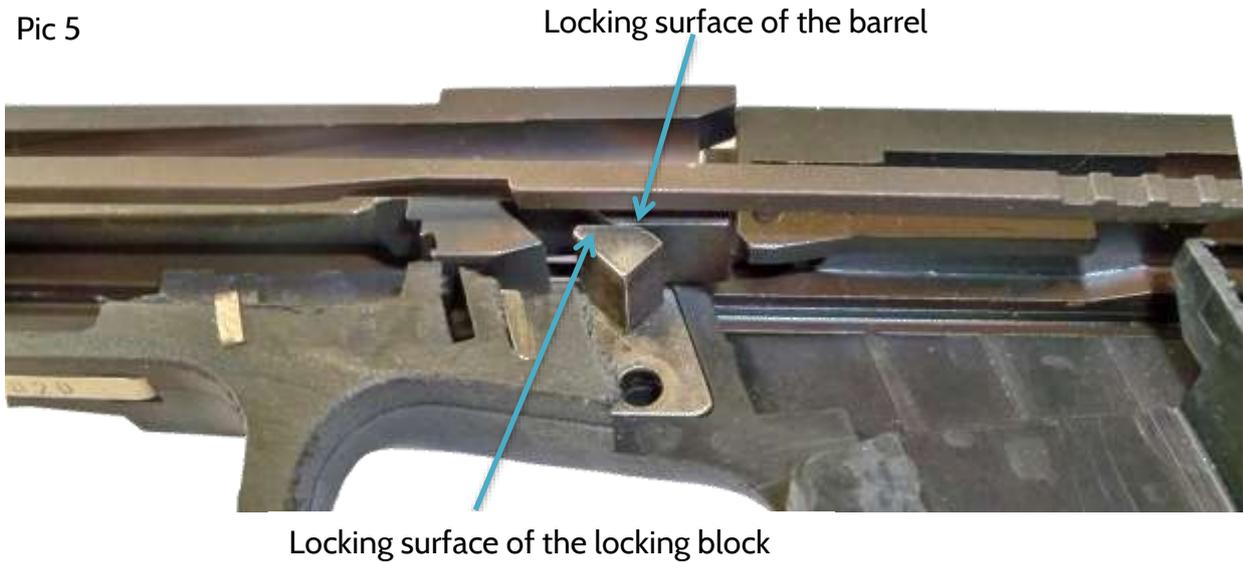
14] Consider other components, do they not have the same or similar functions:

Pic 4 Locking block for Glock pistol



15] The locking block's function is to bring the barrel into battery as the slide moves forward into the firing position. The block cams the barrel into position and the top of the locking block holds the barrel firmly into battery, the two locking surfaces shown below.

Pic 5

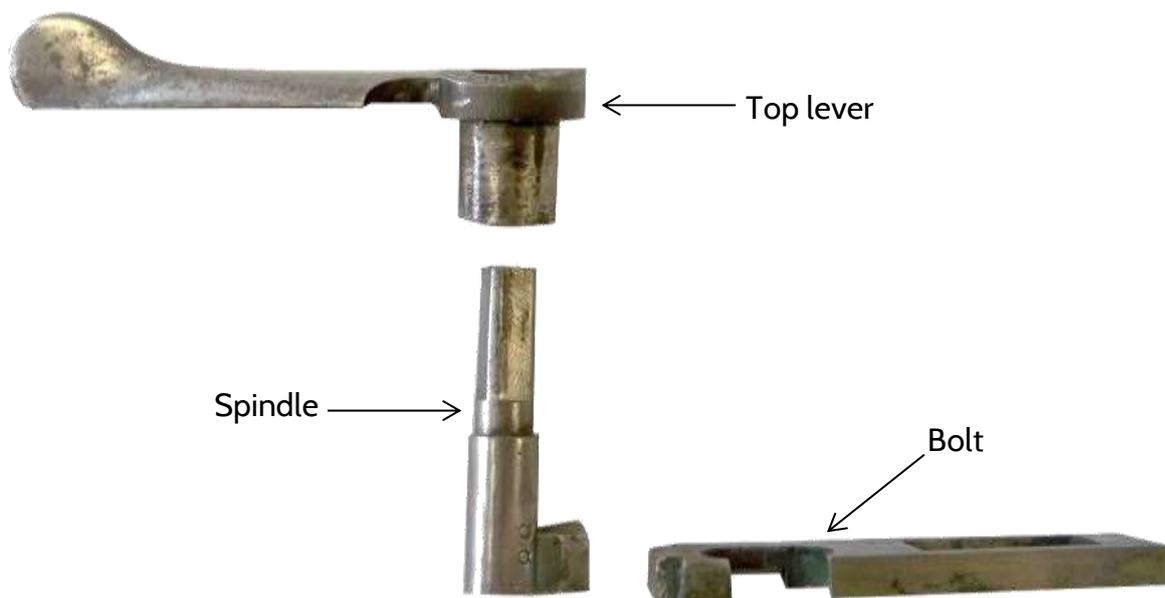


16] The concept of what constitutes “*other mechanism for containing the pressure at the rear of the chamber*” could be the use of the word “*bolt*” i.e. the full sentence being “*a breech block, bolt or other mechanism*”...

17] Does the mechanism need to be something similar to a breech block or bolt, or is it another part of a mechanism, or part of the mechanism of a breech block or bolt?

18] The mechanism for locking a breech could stretch to the top lever, spindle and bolt of a double barrel rifle.

Pic 6



19] If the “*other mechanism*” relates to a mechanism that actually has a breech face and contains the pressure, like a bolt or breech block, then components like carriers are not relevant component parts. Or, if the “*other mechanism*” means components attached to or required by the breech block or bolt to function, then that would include the carrier or locking block.

20] The danger of using the wrong set of words in a definition is that, in this case where the words “*or other mechanism*” have been added, it allows for a description other than breech block or bolt to be caught.

21] In the case of the M4 rifle (pic 1) and the AK47 (pic 2) the carrier certainly is a major component of the firearm and should not be excluded from the description “firearm” (opinion).

22] A solution may be to add “*carrier*” to the set of descriptions in (1D) (a) or (b).

23] Or add the words “*where a bolt is contained within a bolt carrier, the carrier is also a relevant component part.*”

24] Leaving the words in (1D)(c) as they are could, depending on your interpretation, include minor components like these shown in pics 4 and 6.

25] Without clarification all other components of firearms, if they are not listed or included in the description “firearm” in section 57(1) of the Firearms Act 1968 as amended (by the 2017 Act), they are not “*a relevant component part*” and therefore are not controlled.

26] The cartridge case contains the pressure of discharge at the rear of the chamber (fact!). Whilst it is a part of ammunition, when in the chamber of a weapon it is a relevant component part of that weapon too.



Contact Details

Helston Forensics

Water-Ma-Trout

Helston

Cornwall TR13 0LW

United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0) 1326 574747

Email: info@helstonforensics.com

