

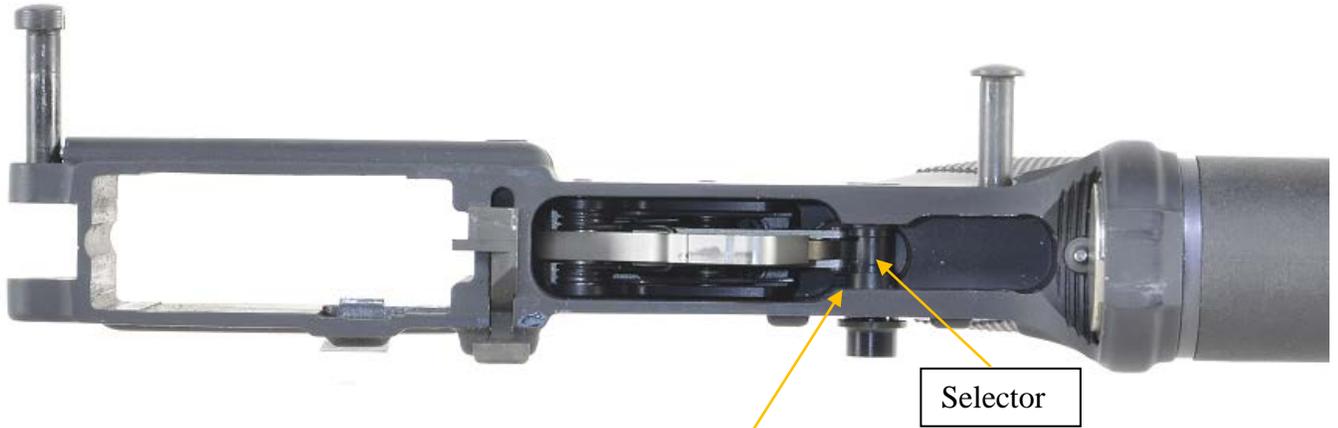
## Semiautomatic AR-15 Pattern Lower Receiver

### General

1. The firearms manufacturing industry is changing the design of the lower receivers of AR-15 pattern semiautomatic rifles and pistols in a way which might impact the classification.
2. There are hundreds of manufacturers which make AR-15 pattern semiautomatic rifles and pistols. Each manufacturer is free to follow their own design and thus the classification of the resulting firearm may vary accordingly.
3. This policy will be employed by Specialized Firearms Support Services (SFSS) to determine the classification of AR-15 pattern semiautomatic rifles and pistols which are recorded in the Firearms Reference Table (FRT).

### Background

4. For AR-15, M16 and M4 pattern firearms, colloquially referred to as “AR platform” firearms, the receiver is divided into two sub-components, the upper receiver and the lower receiver. It is the lower receiver which is regulated under the Firearms Act as it applies to licencing, registration and authorization to transport (ATT) requirements.
5. In general, M16 and M4 pattern assault rifles are prohibited firearms in Canada whereas AR-15 pattern semiautomatic rifles and pistols are restricted firearms.
6. The lower receivers of M16 and M4 pattern selective fire assault rifles differ from the lower receivers of AR-15 pattern semiautomatic rifles and pistols principally in the manufacture of the cavity in which the firing mechanism (trigger group) is installed. The term “selective fire” refers to a firearm which can operate in either a full automatic mode or a semiautomatic mode of fire depending on the setting of a mechanical switch called the “selector”. The M16/M4 trigger group incorporates a full automatic sear, a component essential to full automatic fire capability in a conventional M16 or M4 assault rifle, and not required for the AR-15 firing mechanism.
7. For AR-15 pattern semiautomatic rifles and pistols, the historical approach was to manufacture the lower receiver with interior dimensions too narrow for an M16 pattern full automatic sear to be installed. This approach is known informally as the “SP1” standard, named after the Colt AR-15 SP1 rifle, the first to employ this technique. Figure 1 illustrates the difference between the firing mechanism cavity of the lower receiver of an M16/M4 pattern selective fire assault rifle verses that of an AR-15 pattern semiautomatic rifle manufactured to the SP1 standard.



Narrower cavity near the selector axis pin holes:  
M16 wider than 17 mm;  
AR-15 typically under 13.4 mm.

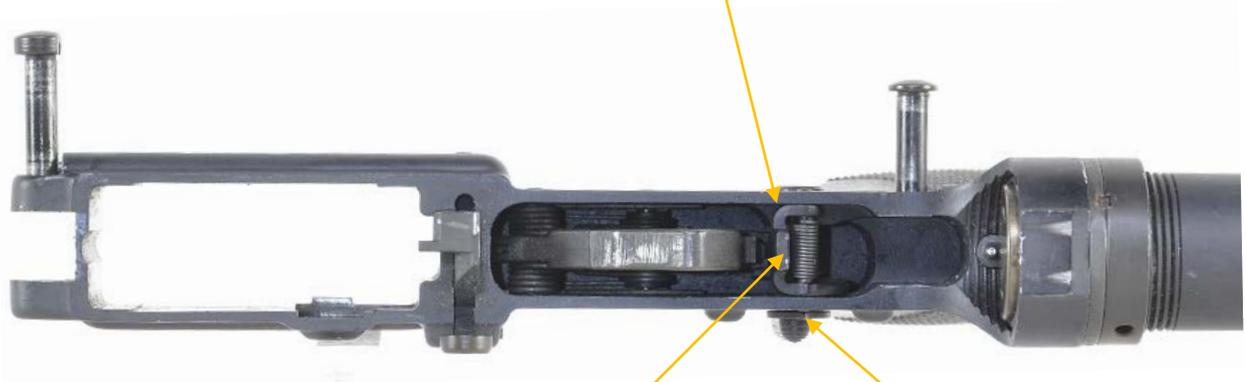
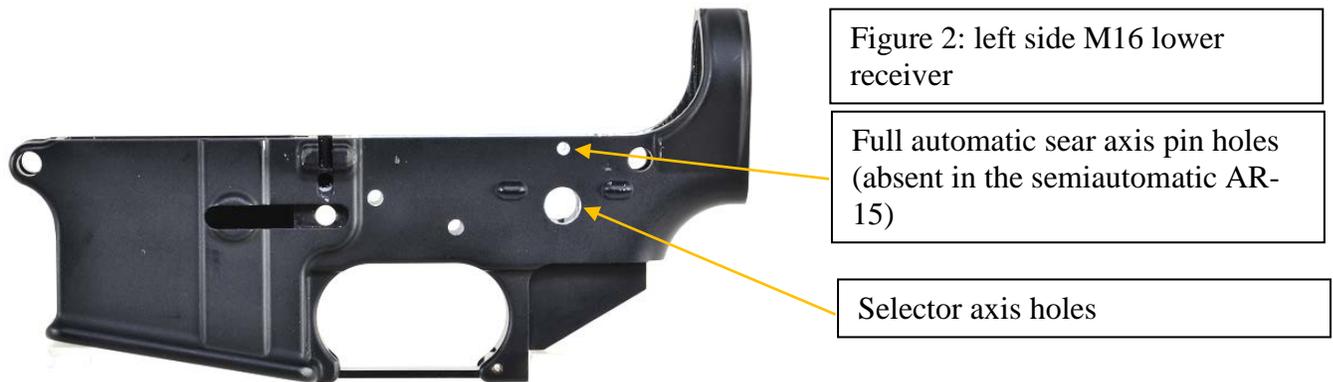


Figure 1:  
AR-15 (upper photo);  
M16 (lower photo).

Full automatic sear,  
spring and axis pin

Selector (hidden by full  
automatic sear)

8. In addition to the narrowing of the firing mechanism cavity, the axis pin holes for the full automatic sear are not drilled in the lower receiver of an SP1 compliant AR-15 pattern semiautomatic rifle. This is illustrated in figure 2.



### **Recent Developments**

9. The SP1 standard was followed voluntarily by firearm manufacturers for decades but in the last few years a trend away from that standard has accelerated. The firing mechanism cavity in AR-15 pattern semiautomatic rifles is being made by many firearms manufacturers much closer in interior dimensions to the M16/M4 pattern.
10. In some cases the primary difference between the selective fire and semiautomatic lower receivers is the presence or absence respectively of the axis pin holes for the full automatic sear.
11. The consequence of the evolution in design is that conversion of a semiautomatic firearm to fire in a full automatic manner becomes significantly easier. Very little, if any, removal of material from the inside of the firing mechanism cavity is required. Drilling the full automatic sear axis pin holes is easily accomplished.
12. AR-15 pattern firearms which are not SP1 compliant risk falling into the prohibited firearm category as they can be easily converted to fire in a full automatic manner in a short period of time.

**Scope**

13. This policy applies to all semiautomatic AR-15 pattern firearms which employ a conventional AR-15 firing mechanism where a classification determination other than “prohibited firearm” is anticipated or sought.
14. This policy can be extended to other types of firearms which employ a conventional AR-15 pattern firing mechanism, where applicable.

**Policy**

15. At least one lower receiver wall must be thickened in the interior cavity above and below the selector axis hole at least as wide as the standard AR-15 pattern selector axis hole (0.375 inches / 9.53 mm) and from the bottom of the cavity to the top, such that the distance between the left and right lower receiver walls is narrowed so that an M16 pattern full automatic sear cannot be installed without substantial removal of material from the receiver walls.
16. The full automatic sear axis pin holes must be absent from the lower receiver.
17. The location of the full automatic sear axis pin holes must not be indicated on the lower receiver by any marking, dimpling or other means.

**Examples**

18. The following four examples illustrate designs which have been accepted by SFSS. Differing designs would have to be assessed independently. In the images below, a polished metal cylinder marks the locations of the selector axis holes, where the lower receiver must have narrowed interior dimensions.
19. Original SP1 standard; the cavity is approximately 11 mm wide at the selector.





20. Both lower receiver walls thickened; the cavity is approximately 12.8 mm wide at the selector.



21. One lower receiver wall thickened; the cavity is approximately 13.4 mm wide at the selector.



22. Both lower receiver walls thickened plus a bridge across the opening; the cavity is approximately 11 mm wide at the selector.



**Remarks**

23. This policy is subject to changes in law or further interpretation by the Courts.
24. A Canadian firearms business may request an inspection of an AR-15 pattern semiautomatic rifle or pistol it plans to import or manufacture for determination of classification.
25. A request for inspection will follow the procedures outlined in the SFSS inspection protocol. Please include in the technical data package six photographs of the lower receiver as indicated in Appendix A.



Murray A. Smith  
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## Appendix A

1. The following six photographs are required for the technical data package for the evaluation of semiautomatic AR-15 pattern lower receivers:
  - a. left exterior, clearly showing the markings (if any) and pin hole configuration;
  - b. left interior, clearly showing the interior receiver walls from the top to the bottom of the cavity;
  - c. right exterior, clearly showing the markings (if any) and pin hole configuration;
  - d. right interior, clearly showing the interior receiver walls from the top to the bottom of the cavity;
  - e. top interior, clearly showing the interior profile of the receiver walls;
  - f. top with scale, clearly showing the width of the interior cavity at the selector axis holes.

2. Left exterior:





3. Left interior:



4. Right exterior:



5. Right interior:





6. Top interior:



7. Top with scale:

