



THE SAGA TRUST
PO BOX 35203, NORTHWAY, 4065
TEL 031-562-9951 CELL 066-003-9226

EMAIL: SAGA@SAGA.ORG.ZA
WEB: WWW.SAGA.ORG.ZA
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SAGA Snippets

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January 2026

Evidence-Based Reform versus Ideological Control: New Zealand Shows what “Best Practice” Actually Looks Like

NEDLAC and the Civilian Secretariat repeatedly invoke phrases such as “evidence-based policy,” “research-driven reform,” and “international best practice” in defence of the Firearms Control Amendment Bill (FCAB). Those claims collapse the moment they are tested against real-world comparators, such as New Zealand’s Arms Bill 2025 (NZAB).

As fate would have it, **New Zealand currently has a comprehensive firearms reform bill** before Parliament and open for public submission (Justice Committee submissions close 16 February 2026) – one that completely repeals and replaces the outdated 1983 Arms Act. Unlike the South African FCAB, this reform does not double down on ideological control – it does the opposite. While not perfect or fool-proof it appears **logical, rational, evidence-led and administratively literate**.

After four decades of global experience with reactive and poorly evidenced firearms restrictions, New Zealand has chosen to correct course. South Africa, by contrast, appears intent on repeating every failed experiment of the last 40 years.

What the New Zealand Arms Bill Actually Does

The NZAB is a full replacement statute, not a patchwork amendment. Its stated purpose is clear and unambiguous:

‘Strengthen public safety while reducing unnecessary regulatory burden on lawful firearm owners.’

That balance is not rhetorical – it is embedded throughout the NZAB, core policy objectives include:

1. Public safety, properly defined

NZAB broadens the concept of safety to include personal, community and public safety – recognising that civilian security is not achieved by administrative obstruction or blanket suspicion of lawful citizens.

2. Responsible access – targeted, not indiscriminate

NZAB strengthens safeguards to ensure firearms access is limited to fit and proper persons, including explicit exclusions for gang members and other high-risk individuals. Crucially, it **targets misuse and criminal risk, rather than treating lawful ownership as the problem**.

3. Simplification of regulation

NZAB actively removes unnecessary complexity by:

- * Allowing licence extensions and urgent renewals,
- * Clarifying regulatory duties and permissions,
- * Updating offences and penalties to reflect actual risk, and
- * Calibrating licensing requirements to improve compliance rather than to frustrate.

Note: This is regulation designed to work – not to entrap citizens in technical non-compliance.

4. Procedural fairness and accountability

The NZAB separates firearms admin-

Special points of interest:

- Evidence-Based Reform versus Ideological Control: New Zealand Shows what “Best Practice” Actually Looks Like
- Wildland Magazine January 2026
- Comparative Analysis: New Zealand Arms Bill (2025) versus South Africa’s FCA/FCAB (2025)
- SAGA Membership
- Advertise in SAGA Snippets
- SAGA Corporate Membership List
- SAGA Fact Sheet #105: Assault Weapons Defined
- Drills You Can Run at (Nearly) Any Range
- SAGA’s 40 Year Insignia

Continued...New Zealand Shows what “Best Practice” Actually Looks Like

istration from frontline policing by creating a new independent firearms regulator, replacing the Police Firearms Safety Authority. This reform helps rebuild trust, reduce conflicts of interest and professionalise licensing as a regulatory function rather than a policing posture. It introduces oversight, appealability and administrative discipline through independent regulation and formal review mechanisms – all features glaringly absent from South Africa’s FCA regime, where officials act as investigator, prosecutor and judge.

5. Regulatory adaptability

The NZAB modernises enforcement by addressing demonstrable emerging risks such as 3D-printed firearms, through targeted, technologically literate provisions. Crucially, it does so without resorting to speculative interventions, mass-surveillance mechanisms, or the criminalisation of lawful supply chains.

Notably, the Bill avoids theoretical constructs such as “coded ammunition,” instead grounding regulatory responses in measures that are practical, enforceable and evidence led. In doing so, it consciously steers **clear of technological dead-ends like ammunition coding schemes**, criticised for being costly, ineffective, easily circumvented and incapable of delivering measurable crime-reduction outcomes.

6. Modern, differentiated licensing categories

Specialist users, businesses and regulated activities are clearly defined and appropriately regulated – rather than being forced into one-size-fits-all categories.

Key Administrative Reforms – Concrete, Not Cosmetic

The reform focuses on due process and realistic timeframes for resolution. For example, the NZAB introduces increased regulation and clarifies the treatment of **blank-firing guns** (noting conversion risk), requiring an appropriate licence/visitor licence except for defined exemptions.

Policy Intent: Regulation, Not Disarmament

New Zealand's Arms Bill is explicit in what it is not:

- It is **not** control-centric.
- It is **not** premised on civilian disarmament.
- It is **not** hostile to lawful ownership.

Instead, it reflects a mature policy position: **public safety is achieved through workable regulation, administrative competence and targeted controls – not through hostility toward compliant citizens.**

Why This Matters for South Africa

The contrast with the South African FCAB is unavoidable and damning – New Zealand's approach reinforces the very principles SAGA has consistently advanced:

A. Regulation with purpose

Safety first, compliance enabled, enforcement achievable - not ideological punishment.

B. Administrative justice and oversight

Independent review mechanisms acknowledge that state power must be accountable - something the FCA systematically fails to recognise.

C. Clear separation between criminal misuse and lawful ownership

High-risk individuals are restricted. Law-abiding citizens are not presumed guilty by default.



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This is what evidence-based **reform** looks like in practice. South Africa has no shortage of international examples to learn from. What it lacks - increasingly - is the willingness to do so.

Bottom Line

New Zealand demonstrates that **public safety does not require civilian disarmament**, nor does it require administrative chaos; it requires:

Clear rules,
Targeted controls,
Reviewable decisions, and
Respect for lawful conduct.

South Africa's FCA/FCAB fails on every one of those metrics. If NEDLAC and government are serious about “international best practice” the comparison is no longer theoretical. The evidence is on the table.

We reject ideological CONTROL; however, we embrace fair, reasonable and rational regulation that is workable, equitable and above all constitutional.

17th January 2026

Drafted by Shaun Lyle, approved by the SAGA Board

See the next page for a Comparative Analysis of the New Zealand Arms Bill (2025) versus South Africa's FCA/FCAB (2025)

Wildland Magazine January 2026

As part of SAGA's collaboration with Wildland here is the link to your free copy of Wildland magazine, January 2026.

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Comparative Analysis: New Zealand Arms Bill (2025) versus South Africa's FCA/FCAB (2021-2025)

Policy Dimension	New Zealand – Arms Bill (2025)	South Africa – FCA / FCAB (2021-2025)
Legislative approach	Full repeal and replacement of outdated 1983 statute	Endless amendments to a structurally failed Act
Policy philosophy	Regulation for safety and compliance	Control for its own sake
Primary objective	Public safety <i>and</i> lawful access	Restriction and attrition of lawful ownership
Treatment of lawful owners	Recognised as legitimate, compliant participants	Presumed risk, burdened by default
Focus of enforcement	High-risk individuals and misuse	Blanket controls applied to all except criminals
Fit and proper person test	Strengthened and targeted (e.g. gang exclusion)	Expanded discretion with weak safeguards
Administrative burden	Actively reduced and simplified	Increased, layered, and opaque
Licence renewals	Extensions and urgent renewals enabled	Criminalisation through delays and backlog
Constitutional alignment	Emphasizes fairness and proportionality	Repeated conflict with administrative justice
Clarity of obligations	Explicit duties and permissions	Vague, shifting, inconsistently applied
Offences and penalties	Updated, risk-calibrated, proportionate	Overbroad, punitive, often technical
Procedural fairness	Independent Licensing Review Committee	No independent appeal or oversight body
Administrative accountability	Decisions reviewable and correctable	Decisions largely insulated from scrutiny
Treatment of specialist users	Clearly categorised and accommodated	Forced into generic civilian framework
Business & trade regulation	Modernised, predictable, lawful	Increasingly hostile and uncertain
Emerging technology – 3D printing	Addressed directly and specifically	Used to justify sweeping restrictions
Health-related suspensions	Extended timeframes to allow due process	Arbitrary suspensions and refusals
Regulatory adaptability	Designed to evolve with technology and use	Static law + ad hoc directives
Underlying assumption	Lawful ownership can coexist safely	Civilian firearms are considered inherently problematic
Evidence standard	Explicit reliance on practicality and enforcement	Repeated claims of "research" without disclosure
Ideological content	Minimal	Dominant
Outcome trajectory	Sustainable, enforceable regulation	Systemic failure with increasing litigation risk

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ASSAULT WEAPONS: FACT versus FICTION – Understanding the Difference Between Military and Civilian Firearms

Overview

The phrase “assault rifle” is one of the most misused and politically manipulated terms in modern firearm debate. It carries no legal definition in South African law and does not appear anywhere in the Firearms Control Act 60 of 2000 (FCA).

The correct technical description refers to a select-fire or fully automatic military rifle, capable of firing multiple rounds with a single trigger pull. By contrast, civilian semi-automatic rifles are mechanically distinct and may only be owned by licensed individuals with dedicated status, under strict FCA controls.

 **Note:** The Firearms Control Act (FCA 60 of 2000) makes no mention of “assault rifles”. The term exists only in political rhetoric – not in South African law.

Technical Definition

Correct Definition: An assault rifle is a select-fire fully automatic firearm designed for sustained fire in combat (automatic or bursts) – capable of firing more than one round/cartridge per single trigger pull.

Historical Context

The term originates from the German Sturmgewehr 44 (StG-44) developed during World War II – literally “storm rifle” or “assault rifle” – combining selective-fire capability with an intermediate-power cartridge.

Examples of true military assault rifles include:

- StG-44 (Germany, 1944)
- AK-47 / AKM (Soviet Union, 1947)
- FN-FAL / R4–R5 (Belgium/South Africa)
- M16 / M4 (United States)

All of these are select-fire military firearms and **not available for civilian licensing**.

Civilian Semi-Automatic Firearms Are Not Assault Weapons

Civilian self-loading rifles such as the AR-15, LM-5, Norinco Type 56, or Ruger Mini-14 are semi-automatic only. They fire one round per trigger pull, just like handguns, bolt action rifles or shotguns. In South Africa, these are only licensable to Dedicated Status hunters or sport shooters under Section 16 of the FCA. They cannot deliver automatic or burst fire and it is illegal to modify them to do so.

<u>Function</u>	<u>Military Assault Rifle</u>	<u>Civilian Rifle/Collectors</u>
Trigger Pull	Fires continuously until released	Fires one round per pull
Fire Selector	Semi / Burst / Full-Auto	Semi-Auto only S20
Legal Status (RSA)	Prohibited under S4 FCA	Licensable under S15 & S16 FCA

Legal Framework – Firearms Control Act (FCA 60 of 2000)

Section 4 – Prohibited Firearms

“No person may possess a fully automatic firearm, unless authorised by the Registrar.”

Under the FCA, fully automatic firearms (continuous fire with one trigger pull) are prohibited. Authorisation is **not available to ordinary civilians** and is **limited only** to:

- SANDF and SAPS operational use; and
- Accredited collectors, under narrow, explicit written authorisation by the Registrar (CFR).

 **Note:** Possession or conversion to automatic fire without authorisation constitutes a serious criminal offence, punishable by imprisonment and forfeiture under Section 94.

Sections 13 – 16 Licensed Civilian Use

- **Section 13:** Self-defence – handguns or pump-action shotguns.
- **Section 15:** Occasional hunting or sport – Manual rifles (bolt, pump, lever, falling block, break neck), semi-automatic handguns and Manual-action shotguns (pump, break-action, lever).
- **Section 16:** Dedicated hunting or sport shooting – semi-automatic rifles and shotguns only for holders of dedicated status through accredited associations.

<u>Section</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Semi-Auto Handgun</u>	<u>Semi-Auto Rifle</u>	<u>Semi-Auto Shotgun</u>	<u>Bolt/Lever/Pump Rifles & Shotguns</u>
S13	Self-defence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Allowed	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Allowed	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Allowed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manual Shotguns – Special conditions
S15	Occasional hunting/sport	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Allowed	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Allowed	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Allowed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Allowed
S16	Dedicated hunting/sport	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Allowed			

 **Note:** Semi-automatic (“self-loading”) firearms are **not “assault rifles”** under any legal or technical definition – they are lawful when properly licensed and accredited.

Section 17 – Collectors

Accredited collectors may possess firearms of historical or technical interest. Full-automatic firearms are **only** permitted if:

- the association is accredited for such category, **and**
- the **Registrar grants specific written authorisation**.

 **Note:** Even then, they may not be fired or used except under strictly controlled, CFR-approved conditions.

Section 20 – Business Purposes

Allows accredited businesses (cash-in-transit, anti-poaching, training providers, corporate business, film industry) to possess firearms for operational purposes. These include semi-automatic firearms and then **ONLY** under strict legislative oversight. Applicants must be accredited under Section 8 and fully compliant with storage and inspection requirements.

Section 94 – Penalties

Unlawful possession of prohibited or unlicensed firearms carries severe penalties, including imprisonment and forfeiture. Penalties are escalated for **prohibited automatic firearms**.

Legal Note:

In South Africa, **assault rifles** (automatic/select-fire) are **prohibited** to civilians.

Semi-automatic/self-loading rifles are **not assault rifles** under any definition and may be lawfully licensed to dedicated hunters and sport shooters under Section 16 of the FCA.

Historic Misuse of the Term

The political misuse of “assault weapon” began in the United States circa 1980s, led by anti-gun activist Josh Sugarmann of the Violence Policy Center (VPC, USA equivalent of GFSA). Sugarmann noted that the public often confuses semi-automatic and fully automatic firearms due to similar appearance – a confusion intentionally exploited for political impact.

This culminated in the 1994 U.S. Federal Assault Weapons Ban, which defined “assault weapons” by cosmetic features (folding stocks, bayonet lugs, flash suppressors) rather than function. The law expired in 2004, and subsequent studies – including a U.S. Department of Justice Evaluation (2004) – **found no measurable effect on crime reduction**.

Correct Terminology for Responsible Use

To promote factual, non-political discussion, SAGA recommends using accurate terminology:

<u>Incorrect Term</u>	<u>Replace With</u>
“Assault Rifle”	“Select-Fire Military Rifle” or “Full-Automatic Military Rifle”
“Semi-Auto Rifle”	“Self-Loading Rifle (SLR)” or “Modern Sporting Rifle (MSR)”

 **Note:** International sport-shooting federations and technical experts internationally recognise these terms.

Conclusion

Words shape policy – and misuse shapes misunderstanding. The term “assault rifle” is a **political construct, not** a technical classification.

In South Africa, fully automatic weapons are already **prohibited**, restricted to the State and in rare cases to authorised collectors. Law-abiding citizens may own semi-automatic/self-loading rifles **only under strict licensing** for sport, hunting (favours bolt action rifles) and conservation/anti-poaching.

Conflating these distinct categories only stigmatizes lawful owners and distracts from the real problem – **the criminal misuse of illegal firearms**.

Protecting our rights by ensuring fact prevails over fiction!

Issued as part of the SAGA Educational Series to guide firearm owners on compliance and responsible firearm ownership.

Acknowledgements

- Drafted by SMS Lyle, approved by the SAGA Board
- SA Gunowners' Association internal technical briefings (2024).
- *Firearms Control Act 60 of 2000 (as amended) & Firearms Control Regulations, 2004*
 - Firearms Control Act 60 of 2000 – Sections 4, 13 – 16, 94.
- *Sturmgewehr 44* historical classification – German Wehrmacht Ordnance Office, 1944.
- ¹ Sugarmann, J. (1988). “Assault Weapons and Accessories in America.” Violence Policy Center.
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- SA Police Service – Central Firearms Registry: Classification of Prohibited vs. Licensable Firearms (2023 CFR Guidelines).



SAGA: The SA Gunowners' Association

Web: www.saga.org.za **Facebook:** GunLobbySAGA

Telephone 031-562-9951 **Cell** 066-003-9226

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Drills You Can Run at (Nearly) Any Range

by George T. Williams
9 January 2026

As shooters, we have never had so much information on firearms, ammunition and the variety of training concepts available to us. We can attend a class taught by a world-class shooter one weekend and the next by an elite combat veteran of the U.S. military. Then there's online video sources advocating nearly an endless array of training ideas, drills and methods. Let's not forget standard shooting positions ranging from prone, kneeling and sitting in addition to standing. This doesn't even touch upon the vital self-defense skills of drawing our holstered concealed handguns, getting in-time, on-time hits on targets, and then safely reholstering. Often, public ranges frustratingly have extremely strict rules enforcing only the most basic firearm exercises: static, slow-fire target practice.

Now, let's go to the range to practice. Most of us are limited by our range facilities to picking our handguns off the bench to engage in slow-fire target practice. Often, public ranges frustratingly have extremely strict rules enforcing only the most basic firearm exercises: static, slow-fire target practice. Indoor ranges limit us to extremely small cubicles. Indoor and outdoor public ranges generally prohibit rapid-fire, often restricting shooters to no more than one shot per second.

Unfortunately, there is sound reasoning for these limitations. Many shooters are novices, having no formal training. These restrictions are necessarily based upon the need for maximum safety of everyone due to the varied levels of skill and safety among the shooting public.

You may have just graduated from a week-long, high-speed tactical course where you spent your time running and gunning, pushing the limits of your skills. You know these new proficiencies, like any skill, are extremely perishable, rapidly degrading without regular, conscious repetition. Or, you may hope to increase your skills beyond simple target shooting. If your range won't permit practical live-fire self-defense training, what can you do?

Professionals know that live-fire should be the lesser part of your training routine. While nothing can replace the need to fire bullets at targets, for much of our "tactical" or practical training, we can use other tools to ensure our skills stay robust.

Dry-fire

For professionals (and everyone else), dry-fire practice is essential for maintaining our skills. For every round fired at the range, it's a good idea to dry-fire a minimum of five times. Dry-fire lets us concentrate solely on our firing procedure (grip, sight alignment/sight picture, focus on the front sight, trigger press and follow-through) without recoil. We can better observe our unforced glitches in our shooting processes. Smoothly practicing presentations of the handgun's sights into the eye-target line (that imaginary line from your eyes to the target), seeing the sight picture and pressing the trigger creates what is casually known as "muscle memory".

Basics for dry-fire drills are conducted with absolutely no ammunition in or near the dry-fire area: 1) Designate a "no-ammo zone" and strictly adhere to this standard; 2) Dry-fire takes place only in the no-ammo zone; and 3) Before practice, guns are checked and then double-checked to ensure they are clear. Firearm-safety rules are strictly adhered to - especially muzzle direction; 4) Dry-fire practice sessions should each be limited to less than 10 minutes.

"But dry-fire is so boring!" I've never understood that comment because there is so much to pay attention to, learn from and work on. Frank Proctor uses the analogy of Information ... Processing ... Output for every shot. We take in the information of sight picture, process that information against the data we've already stored from every shot we've ever taken, then output a consistent grip for a consistent trigger press when conditions within the present shot are optimal to get the hit we need. We then note any aberrations in the shooting process (more information) to add to our database, then proceed to the next shooting process a little bit better than we were before.

Continued...Drills You Can Run at (Nearly) Any Range

Every trigger press gives us information about everything we did during that individual process. Did the front sight move when the trigger was pressed? Probably an issue with the grip or excessive force on the trigger. Did the front sight move immediately prior to the shot breaking? Probably helping the shot break rather than simply facilitating the shooting process. Was my eye focused on that front sight both when the shot broke and afterward? If not, I need to concentrate on my attentional focus to maintain my follow-through. All of these points of consideration and more keep us interested and focused for those few minutes of dry-fire and directly apply to our live-fire practice.

Not Limited to Static Practice

Dry-fire practice is an opportunity to introduce more dynamic skills that cannot be attempted at most ranges. For example, in some self-defense situations, especially within several yards of a threat, moving while drawing your handgun creates surprise, introducing complexity for the attacker, presenting a moving target who's fighting back. It's also useful to draw when moving to cover, getting you into the fight more quickly.

With a cleared (or non-firing) handgun, present the handgun at the target and walk toward the target. You'll probably see the sights bouncing off-target. Think of your legs as shock absorbers and allow them to calm your sights. It takes only a little practice. Soon you begin to anticipate when your sights are moving on target, and a trigger press will gain your hit. This is the perfect time to mentally reinforce the concept of "acceptable area hits" rather than "small, perfect groups." Once you gain familiarity, begin moving angularly forward and to the rear as well, noting how your shoulders and arms must modify their positions to maintain targeting.

Once you are more comfortable with moving and dry-fire, moving while drawing a concealed, unloaded handgun is the next step. As with everything, start slowly with the goal of being smooth while continuing to move throughout the drawing and firing sequence. Feet and hands move simultaneously, with hands clearing clothing for the gun-hand to

establish a firm master grip, then executing the same draw stroke as you would in a stationary draw into the gun-target line. The trigger is pressed on the first acceptable sight picture. While practicing slowly at first to create perfect coordination, the speed of your movement and draw soon increases with increasing success.

Other possible skills with which to familiarize yourself include working out how to draw or how to shoot from the ground in unusual positions should you trip, fall or be thrown to the ground. And don't neglect shooting when lying on your back or prone with your head toward the threat. Drawing your handgun while sitting in the car, safely negotiating the seat belt and steering wheel, may be useful given the amount of time we spend in our cars. You may find you need to rethink your style of carry. Learning to work inside your home around corners and from doorways can be explored. While not making anyone "combat ready" in house-clearing skills, this is about familiarization and not being forced to re-invent the wheel while under the pressure of imminent deadly threat.

There are also non-firing tools that can help us like Laser Training Cartridges, SIRT Training Pistols and the Mantis X10 Elite.

There may be no firearm practice that cannot be safely performed in a dry-fire session, except recoil management. Our imagination is the only limit. While some are privileged to train at less-restrictive private ranges or on public land, most shooters must abide by strict range rules. We only allow ourselves to be restrained if we believe we are powerless to explore practical methods of self-defense shooting other than static-target practice.

Article shortened by SAGA from <https://www.shootingillustrated.com/content/drills-you-can-run-at-nearly-any-range/>



SAGA's 40 Year Insignia Still in Stock

Some stock of SAGA's 40 Year insignia is still available to purchase.

Order on our website:
<https://shop.saga.org.za/>

PVC Patch with Velcro Backing



PVC patches are the modern equivalent to embroidered patches. Made of durable plastic they are flexible, lightweight, and weatherproof. The new SAGA PVC patch measures 6x4.2cm (length x width), and will attach to anything with Velcro like jackets, caps, backpacks and shooting bags.

Price: R90

Double Lock Folding Knife

This folder by Coast has an extremely comfortable nylon-handled grip, a 9.2cm long stainless steel blade with an ambidextrous opener, a lanyard hole and a 3-position clip. The Double Lock is a patented safety switch mechanism that works in conjunction with a primary liner lock to prevent disengagement.



Lazer engraved with the simplified SAGA 40 Year logo, this strong folding knife is robust and will give years of good service.

Price: R380

Softshell Jacket

This quality softshell jacket is a Barron brand and is available in black with the simplified SAGA 40 Year logo embroidered on the front left chest.

The jacket has elasticated binding on the sleeve opening, front shaped panels with welt pockets, bar-tacks at pockets for added durability, inverted nylon full zip opening and an inner storm flap.

Comfortable and easy-to-wear, these jackets not only look good, but will wash well too. Available in sizes from small to 5XL.

These jackets need to be ordered - contact the office for more information.

