

Statement on Personally Owned Patrol Rifles (POPR) and Patrol-Rifle Programs in U.S. Police Departments

Across the United States, a number of police agencies permit officers to carry *personally owned* patrol rifles once they complete agency-specific training and pass a qualification course, often paired with an approved list of makes, models, and accessories to ensure safety, consistency, and liability control. At the same time, many agencies choose to issue rifles centrally and prohibit personally owned guns on duty. Both approaches can be effective when grounded in *clear policy, robust training, and recurring certification*. [1]

Why patrol rifles and why approved lists and qualifications

- Modern patrol-rifle adoption accelerated after incidents like the 1997 North Hollywood shootout and subsequent active-shooter events, where rifles offered accuracy, standoff distance, and armor penetration beyond sidearms and shotguns. The International Association of Chiefs of Police has long emphasized that if departments deploy patrol rifles, they should couple the decision with comprehensive training and ongoing qualification. [1][2]
- States or POST bodies typically set baseline firearms qualification standards, which agencies then tailor. For example, Arizona's POST Board updated its annual firearm qualification courses (day and nighttime) effective January 2024; agencies may adopt these or comparable courses for rifles as part of local programs. [3]
- Many agencies manage risk with approved weapons lists and technical specifications (e.g., AR-15 platform, 5.56/.223 chambering, iron sights plus approved optics, weapon-mounted lights, trigger weight and manufacturer standards). See, for instance, Austin PD's *Approved Weapons & Ammunition List* (covering both city-issued and personally owned weapons) and Baltimore PD's approved firearms categories. [4][5]

Departments that *allow* personally owned patrol rifles (examples)

- **Fontana Police Department (CA)** – Policy 432: “A patrol rifle is an authorized weapon which is owned by the officer or by the Department... Personally owned rifles may be carried for patrol duty... if pre-approved by the Chief of Police and Rifle Instructor(s).” The policy specifies authorized Colt models, caliber, optics/sights requirements, ammunition rules, and limits on modifications. [6]

- **Orange County Sheriff-Coroner (CA)** – Policy 382 explicitly permits *private purchase of patrol rifles for duty use* with ***detailed specifications*** (semi-auto only, 5.56/.223, barrel lengths, approved sighting systems and lights) and ***an addendum of authorized manufacturers maintained by Training Division***. [7]
- **California Exposition & State Fair Police Department (CA)** – General Order 200.300 allows officers to carry *personally owned* AR-15-style rifles on duty ***subject to inspection, trigger-weight minimums, approved optics/lights, and department-approved ammunition***. [8]
- **Cheswold Police Department (DE)** – Patrol Rifle Policy permits *personally owned rifles* if ***pre-approved in writing by the Chief, inspected by the firearms instructor/armorer, chambered in specified calibers, and subject to bi-annual training and qualification***. [9]
- **San Antonio (TX)** – While SAPD maintains a central weapons policy, the San Antonio Police Officers Association coordinated the purchase of M&P15A patrol rifles for *individual officers* that were approved for on-duty use, highlighting a model where officers privately purchase duty-authorized rifles ***within agency specifications***. [10]

Note: These agencies demonstrate the common elements of a POPR approach, that include ***leadership pre-approval, inspection by instructors/armorers, adherence to standardized specs, and recurring qualification***.

Departments with patrol-rifle programs that *restrict or prohibit* personally owned rifles

- **Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (CA)** – LASD authorizes AR-15 platform patrol rifles but prohibits on-duty use of personally owned rifles; rifles must meet department specs and be managed by the rangemaster/armorer. [11]
- **Columbus Division of Police (OH)** – Firearms Directive 2.03 states sworn personnel shall **not carry personally owned shotguns or rifles** on duty, emphasizing standardization with division-approved firearms. [12]
- **Mesa Police Department (AZ)** – Patrol Rifle Protocols specify only department-issued rifles are authorized for patrol-rifle operators; the Range Sergeant oversees selection, quarterly training, and qualification. [13]
- **Phoenix Police Department (AZ)** – Historically permitted officers to privately purchase handguns/shotguns, but rifles were department-issued only; a public report noted “no private purchases” for patrol rifles while the city expanded issued rifles to squads. [14][15]

Akron, OH - APD

- **Akron Police Department** has allowed officers to carry *personally owned* patrol rifles provided they complete a three-day patrol-rifle course, pass annual training, and meet Ohio

Peace Officer Training Commission rifle qualification standards. APD requires rifles from reputable manufacturers in 5.56/.223, with slings and iron sights, and subject to instructor inspection. [16]

- **As of January 2026**, the City of Akron announced a budgeted plan to initiate a phase-out of personally owned rifles by beginning purchases of department rifles for patrol, citing operational efficiency and community discussions following critical incidents. [17][18]

Examples of successful patrol-rifle programs

- **Oakland Police Department (CA) – Patrol Rifle Program (PRP):** OPD’s General Order K-6 sets clear selection, certification, and training protocols for field-deployed patrol rifles, defines authorized models (e.g., Colt LE6920), and integrates tactical team policies, including provisions for privately owned rifles in specific tactical roles, subject to leader approval and qualification. [19]
- **Bay Area Rapid Transit Police (CA):** BART PD’s Patrol Rifle Operator Course outlines a structured 16-hour curriculum covering safety, policy review, maintenance, malfunctions, marksmanship positions, and agency qualification, demonstrating a mature training framework tied to deployment standards. [20]
- **Austin Police Department (TX):** APD’s *Approved Weapons & Ammunition List* governs both city-issued and personally owned weapons (including semi-auto rifles), inspections, allowed modifications, optic/light standards, and annual reviews, illustrating the “approved list + qualification” model that many agencies emulate. [4]

Common safeguards when allowing POPR

1. **Leadership pre-approval & documentation** (e.g., formal request, weapons card/registry). [7][6]
2. **Technical specifications & approved manufacturers** (caliber, platform, barrel length, trigger weight; approved optics/lights). [7][6]
3. **Instructor/armorer inspection** before any duty carry; prohibition of unsafe modifications. [7][6]
4. **Training and qualification** (initial course; periodic/annual certs; remediation/removal if not qualified). [20][13]
5. **Ammunition control** (duty-approved rounds only; bonding/barrier performance when applicable). [6]
6. **Storage/handling protocols** (cruiser-ready configuration; secure racks/cases; handling rules). [21]
7. **Incident documentation and review** (OIS protocols; reporting when rifles are pointed or deployed). [22]

Bottom line

There is a well-established, professionally accepted pathway for departments that choose to permit personally owned patrol rifles: define what is allowed via an approved list, require formal training and qualification, and enforce strict inspection and maintenance standards. Other agencies achieve similar public-safety outcomes by issuing rifles centrally and prohibiting personally owned rifles on duty. Either model can work as long as it incorporates policy clarity, training rigor, and disciplined oversight. [1]

Respectfully,

Anthony Finnell



Independent Police Auditor

References

- [1] [Patrol Rifle: Considerations for Adoption and Use | Office of Justice ...](#)
- [2] [The Tactical Rifle in Law Enforcement - TacticalGear.com](#)
- [3] [Peace Officer Standards and Training Board - Arizona](#)
- [4] [Advanced Officer Training Firearms Training Unit January 4, 2024 - APROA](#)
- [5] [Approved Firearms List](#)
- [6] [021021 Policy.pdf - Fontana, California](#)
- [7] [Patrol Rifle](#)
- [8] [PATROL RIFLES 200.301 PURPOSE 200.302 PATROL RIFLE](#)
- [9] [Patrol Rifle Policy - Town of Cheswold](#)
- [10] [Smith & Wesson Provides Firearms To Texas Officers - POLICE Magazine](#)
- [11] [5-09/170.05 - Authorized Patrol Rifles - PARS Public Viewer](#)
- [12] [Columbus Police Division Directive](#)
- [13] [DPM 1.6.20 Department Patrol Rifle Protocols Policy Manual](#)
- [14] [Phoenix PD to get more patrol rifles - Police1](#)
- [15] [Source: Phoenix Police Department - azplea.com](#)
- [16] [Why Akron police officers use personal rifles while on duty](#)
- [17] [Akron budget will initiate phaseout of police using their own rifles](#)
- [18] [Akron budget will initiate phaseout of police using their own rifles](#)
- [19] [FINAL DGO K-6 PUBLICATION COPY 6 Mar 24 - PowerDMS](#)
- [20] [RIFLE COURSE - Bay Area Rapid Transit](#)
- [21] [Patrol Rifle Operator Program](#)
- [22] [MESA POLICE DPM 2.1.20 Department Firearms Use Effective Policy Manual](#)