

Technology may be the answer to gun control

By Michele Richinick, MSNBC

Smart guns similar to James Bond's pistol are marching closer to reality as manufacturers expect to continue testing prototypes throughout 2014 and a few politicians push for new technology to make firearms safer.

Manufacturers design "smart" guns, also referred to as "personalized" or "owner-authorized" firearms, to prevent intentional and unintentional shootings by children and other unauthorized users. The idea of incorporating technology into guns took hold during the early 1990s when the National Institute of Justice commissioned a study to find a solution to prevent law enforcement officials from being killed by their own weapons, both in the home and by assailants, said Donald Sebastian, senior vice president for research and development at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. A report published in 1995 recommended radio-frequency identification as the viable approach for placing an electronic system into a firearm.

The U.S. government became attentive to the issue in the late 1990s by providing federal funding to accelerate the development of a safe and more secure personalized handgun, Sebastian said. Manufacturing companies worked with biometrics – using features of an individual to identify the user of a gun – in an attempt to implement firearms technology. But there wasn't a commercial outcome.

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