“Smartgun” locks out unauthorized users

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A gun owner’s worst nightmare is his own weapon being turned against him. The Armatix “Smartgun [1]” concept presents a novel solution—fingerprint identification, combined with biometric authentication (paired with a wristwatch) makes the weapon useless in the wrong hands.

To use the Smartgun, users first enable the wristwatch through fingerprint identification. An internal database compares the print against authorized users and responds accordingly. The watch communicates with the gun wirelessly, and users can set the authentication distance. If the gun is receiving a signal, a green LED on the back lights up. If not, you’ll see a red light.

Unfortunately, there may be a very limited market for the Smartgun. For one, there’s the price (according to Wired [2], about 7,000 Euros, or nearly $10,000). Neither your average gun owner nor cash-strapped precincts will want to shell out 10 grand for a sidearm. Then there’s the convenience factor. According to the company, arming and disarming the weapon occurs in “a matter of seconds [3],” but that may be too slow in an emergency. And what if there’s a system failure? I’d assume that police officers would arm the weapon *before* their shift, but there's still a huge risk.

Forget home defense. Care to put on a watch, swipe your finger, and pick up the

gun (praying it receives a wireless signal) when someone’s breaking into your house? And to be blunt, this kind of system is impractical for the military.

The Smartgun concept sounds fascinating. But the cost, combined with the general clunkiness of the system, may restrict the audience. Still, I’m curious to see how this technology evolves. A biometric reader on the pistol grip would be even better. Eliminate the watch and you’ve got something.

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