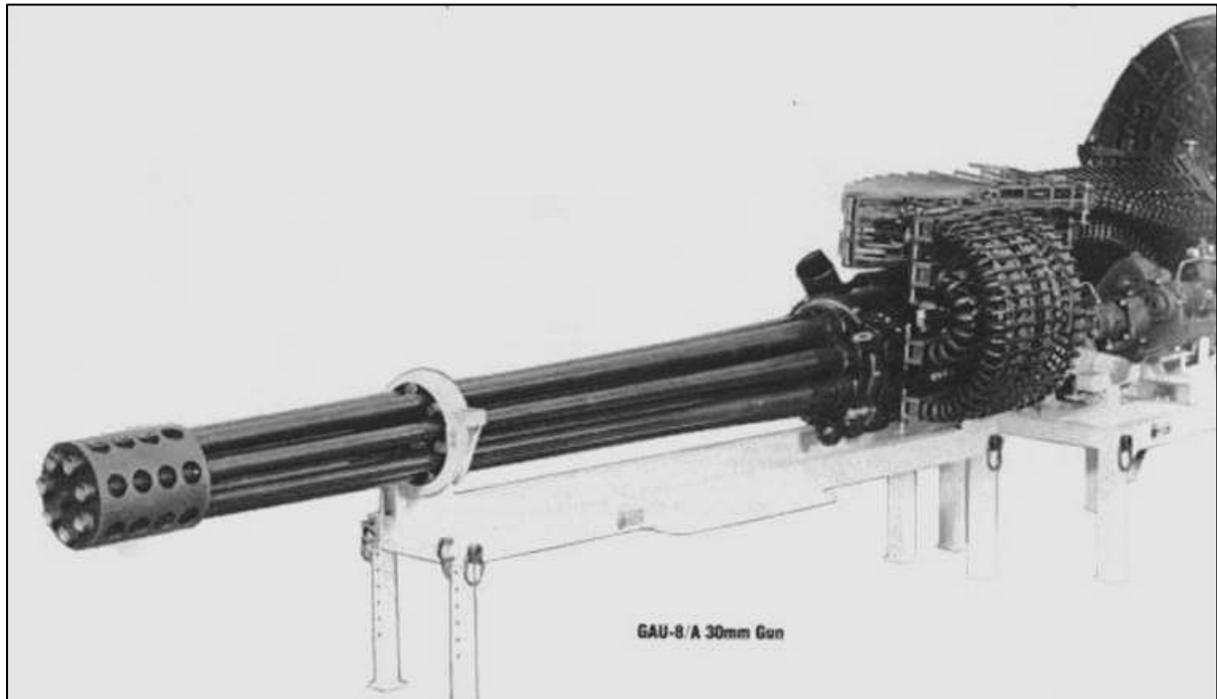


First there was this gun



It was developed by General Electric, the "We bring good things to life" people. It's one of the modern-day Gatling guns. It shoots very big bullets. It shoots them very quickly.

Someone said, "Let's put it in an airplane." Someone else said, "Better still, let's build an airplane around it."

So they did.

And "they" were the Fairchild-Republic airplane people.

They had done such a good job with an airplane they developed back in WWII called the P-47 Thunderbolt, that they decided to call it the A-10 Thunderbolt. They made it



so it was very good at flying low and slow and shooting things with that fabulous gun. But since it did fly low and slow, they made it bulletproof, or almost so. A lot of bad guys have found you can shoot an A10 with anything from a pistol to a

23mm Soviet cannon and it just keeps on flying and shooting.

When they got through, it looked like this ...



It's not sleek and sexy like an F-18 or the stealthy Raptors and such, but I think it's such a great airplane because it does what it does better than any other plane in the world. It kills tanks.

Not only tanks, as Saddam Hussein's boys found out to their horror, but armoured personnel carriers, radar stations, locomotives, bunkers, fuel depots... Just about anything the bad guys thought was bulletproof turned out to be easy pickings for this beast.

See those engines. One of them alone will fly this puppy. The pilot sits in a very thick titanium alloy "bathtub." That's typical of the design.



They were smart enough to make every part the same whether mounted on the left side or right side of the plane, like landing gear, for instance. Because the engines are mounted so high (away from ground debris) and the landing gear uses such low-pressure tyres, it can operate from a damaged airport, interstate highway, ploughed field, or dirt road.

Everything is redundant. They have two of almost everything. Sometimes they have three of something. Like flight controls. There's triple redundancy of those, and even if there is a total failure of the double hydraulic system, there is a set of manual flying controls.



Capt. Kim Campbell sustained this damage (above) over Bagdad and flew for another hour before returning to base. But, back to that gun

It's so hard to grasp just how powerful it is.

This is the closest I could find to showing you just what this cartridge is all about. What the guy is holding is NOT the 30mm round, but a "little" .50 Browning machinegun round and the 20mm cannon round which has been around for a long time.

The 30mm is MUCH bigger.

Below, at the bottom are the .50 BMG and 20x102 Vulcan the fellow was holding. At the bottom right is the bad boy we're discussing.



Let's get some perspective here: The .223 Rem (M16 rifle round) is fast. It shoots a 55 or so grain bullet at about 3300 feet/sec, give or take. It's the fastest of all those rounds shown (except one). When you move up to the .30 calibre rounds, the bullets jump up in weight to 160-200 grains. Speeds run from about 2600 to 3000 FPS or so.



The .338 Lapua is the king of the sniper rifles these days and shoots a 350 grain bullet at 2800 FPS or so. They kill bad guys at over a mile with that one. The .50 BMG is really big. Mike Beasley has one on his desk. Everyone who picks it up thinks it's some sort of fake, unless they know big ammo. It's really huge with a bullet that weighs 750 grains and goes as fast the Lapua.

I don't have data on the Vulcan, but hang on to your hat. The bullet for the 30x173 Avenger has an aluminium jacket around a spent uranium core and weighs 6560 grains (yes, over 100 times as heavy as the M16 bullet), and flies through the air at 3500 FPS (which is faster than the M16 as well).

The gun shoots at a rate of 4200 rounds per minute. Yes, four thousand. Pilots typically shoot either one- or two-second burst which set loose 70 to 150 rounds. The system is optimized for shooting at 4,000 feet.

OK, the best for last. You've got a pretty good idea of how big that cartridge is, but I'll bet you're like me and you don't fully appreciate how big the GA GAU-8 Avenger really is. Take a look



Each of those seven barrels is 112 inches long. That's 2.8 metres. The entire gun is 19-1/2 feet long (Almost 6 metres). Think how impressive it would look set up in your living room.

And - it doesn't eject the empty shells but runs them back into the storage drum. There's just so many flying out, they felt it might damage the aircraft and they can hang those bomb and rocket things on 'em too, just in case.

After all, it is an airplane!

Like I said, this is a beautiful design.

I'm glad it's ours.

Yeah..... but..... there are people in the US government that want to quit using this aircraft. They want to decommission it! It is one of the most feared aircraft in the world by our enemies. Now you know why. And maybe why some in the US Government want it done away with.

