



## Gun Controllers Don't Want to Waste Tucson Tragedy

Item: President Obama wrote in the Arizona Daily Star for March 13 about the mass shooting that had taken place in Tucson two months previously in a piece headlined, "We must seek agreement on gun reform." He said that after the attack, in which 19 were shot, "Americans by and large rightly refrained from finger-pointing, assigning blame or playing politics with other people's pain."

*The President called for an end to "gun violence" and expressed apparent wonderment that a man "our Army rejected as unfit for service" who had been thought "unstable" in college "was able to walk into a store and buy a gun."*



*Said Obama: "Now, like the majority of Americans, I believe that the Second Amendment guarantees an individual right to bear arms. And the courts have settled that as the law of the land. In this country, we have a strong tradition of gun ownership that's handed from generation to generation. Hunting and shooting are part of our national heritage. And, in fact, my administration has not curtailed the rights of gun owners — it has expanded them, including allowing people to carry their guns in national parks and wildlife refuges."*

*As a society, he said, "we have a responsibility to do everything we can to put a stop" to gun violence. Some, he went on, "aren't interested in participating. Some will say that anything short of the most sweeping anti-gun legislation is a capitulation to the gun lobby. Others will predictably cast any discussion as the opening salvo in a wild-eyed scheme to take away everybody's guns."*

**Item:** *Newsweek for March 13 said that "it's clear that the present moment may be peculiar enough, and the forces at work potent enough, to produce real movement on gun safety — provided Obama proceeds carefully." There are "signs of hope," maintained Newsweek, in "proposed laws" that "emphasize how preventable Tucson really was. In the House, New York Rep. Carolyn McCarthy, whose husband was killed in a 1993 mass shooting on a Long Island train, has introduced a bill seeking to reinstate the prohibition on high-capacity clips that took effect in 1994 but lapsed when the assault-weapons ban expired 10 years later."*

**Item:** *E.J. Dionne, Jr., in the Washington Post, decried that the President "practically begged the gun lobby to support modest reforms of our lax gun laws" — not even "asking for a ban on those large gun magazines, which would almost certainly have saved lives on that January day." The President, Dionne counseled, "could set a good example by standing up to the bullies of the NRA."*

**Correction:** If there is one thing that the President does well, it is to read the polls. Many in his camp would prefer all-out and immediate confiscation of firearms, but the public, thankfully, knows better. One recent national poll found that an overwhelming 75 percent of voters believes that gun laws in the United States are either adequate or too harsh for law-abiding Americans. Accordingly, even those



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politicians who believe that the right to arms is outmoded tread carefully lest the electorate turn on them.

Still, the fact that Rahm Emanuel has moved from running the inside game at the White House to running Chicago as its Mayor doesn't mean that the administration has abandoned the celebrated Emanuel doctrine of never letting a crisis go to waste. What is widely seen as a tragedy, gun-grabbers view as an opportunity.

Enter the opportunists. As has been admitted in the very liberal online site Huffington Post, the White House is seeking to impose restrictions in a piecemeal fashion that takes into account the current political makeup in Washington. An article called "Obama Looking for Ways Around Congress on Gun Policy" noted that the "Obama administration is exploring potential changes to gun laws that can be secured strictly through executive action, administration officials say."

As to the President's rebuke of those who are worried that new gun laws are merely vehicles to be used by gun grabbers and his claim that no one was vilified by political factions after the Tucson shooting, the President's memory, one gathers, is mighty short when it comes to recalling how so many of his allies were frantically pointing fingers after the incident. He also seems to have forgotten his own declared belief that "the assault weapons ban makes sense." Or perhaps he hopes we have forgotten?

In any event, columnist Katie Pavlich did recall what actually did happen: "Immediately following the shooting, left wing websites and the mainstream media placed blame and responsibility on Sarah Palin, Sean Hannity, Rush Limbaugh and any other conservative commentator that came to mind, not [to] mention the entire tea party movement, which was held responsible for the shooting before police had even released the name of a suspect. We now know (allegedly) the person truly responsible for the tragic events that day as Jared Lee Loughner, a crazed and disturbed man who listed the *Communist Manifesto* as one of his favorite books."

As Pavlich pointed out, the President "used Jared Loughner as an example of a mad man who got his hands on a gun, citing lax gun law enforcement." However, what he failed to mention "is that Pima County Sheriff Clarence Dupnik, who by the way also blamed the entire shooting on 'vitriolic rhetoric' and called Arizona the Mecca of hatred and bigotry at the time, had multiple encounters with Loughner for issuing death threats to a radio host among other things before the shooting on January 8, meaning Dupnik allowed him to slip through the cracks of law enforcement more than once."

As part of its efforts to "take on the issue," the White House extended an "olive branch" to its opponents in the gun-control debate, as the *Washington Post* put it. However, the National Rifle Association didn't provide the President with a photo opportunity so he could display his supposed sincerity concerning the Second Amendment. Apparently someone among those bullies at the NRA keeps historical files. Chris Cox, executive editor of the NRA's Institute for Legislative Action, commented: "Of course the NRA would refuse to sit down with a group of people who have spent their entire lives working to infringe on Americans' Second Amendment freedoms. These folks are on record with their desire to ban firearms, ration gun purchases for law-abiding Americans, and give the anti-gun elitists at the United Nations the authority to regulate the firearms trade and dictate U.S. gun policy."

The President's op-ed, cited above, tried to portray his administration as a champion for granting more rights to gun owners. It must be hard to try to save both faces. Obama patted himself on the back for allowing guns in national parks and on Amtrak trains, but the truth is a different matter. As explained by NRA head Wayne LaPierre — as reported deep in a *New York Times* story — those "measures had



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been attached as amendments to larger pieces of legislation — a bill cracking down on credit card companies and a transportation appropriations bill, respectively — that the president wanted passed.”

Another line thrown out by the President, echoing talking points from gun-control groups, affected astonishment about the Tucson shooter being allowed to buy a gun when he had been rejected by the Army. That is disingenuous at the very least. Each and every year, many thousands of people are found not to be qualified for the Army, for a wide variety of reasons, including flat feet. Should people with flat feet have different legal rights?

Moreover, the gun involved in the crime would not have been illegal even during the so-called assault-weapons ban of the Clinton years, as has been repeatedly claimed. As Kevin Williamson explained in National Review Online:

The weapon in question, a 9mm Glock 19 pistol, was not banned; neither were the 31-round magazines the shooter used. What was banned was the manufacture or importation of new magazines with a capacity of more than ten rounds.

That is not hair-splitting, inasmuch as high-capacity magazines for Glocks were and are commonplace — almost as commonplace as Glocks themselves — and remained so even while their manufacture and importation were banned. Most Glock 9mm magazines are usable in any Glock 9mm pistol, regardless of model. Glock makes at least four different 9mm pistols at the moment — 9mm being one of the most common calibers — and a high-capacity magazine sold for almost any of those could have been used in the Glock 19. Third-party manufacturers make them as well, and have made them for years and years, meaning that AWB [assault-weapons ban] or no AWB, finding one is not very difficult. The only difference the AWB is likely to have made is that the shooter would have had a used magazine instead of a new one (assuming he did in fact have a new one), and he probably would have paid five bucks more for it.

Nor is it true that, as the Brady Center claims, “Glock pistols are particularly easy to fire, letting off rounds as quickly as the operator can pull the trigger.” All semiautomatic weapons let off rounds as quickly as the operator can pull the trigger; that is the definition of a semiautomatic weapon. The Glock 19 does not have a particularly light trigger pull — its standard trigger-pull weight is 5.5 pounds — and a great many high-quality modern handguns have adjustable triggers, anyway, for a variety of reasons. Many women and people with less hand strength, for example, prefer a lighter trigger.

The President need not look too far to find folks who are really “wild-eyed” on this issue, including a bevy in his own party. New York Democratic Representative Carolyn McCarthy rushed to judgment with a call for getting rid of magazines with more than 10 rounds, even those that already have been bought by gun owners. Constitutional and commonsensical issues aside, a law that would have the feds ripping away legally purchased magazines from the hands of law-abiding citizens isn’t much of a deterrent to someone willing to commit murder. It’s also a bit underhanded considering that the most celebrated victim in the Tucson shooting, Representative Gabrielle Giffords (D-Ariz.), describes herself as a “longtime gun owner and strong supporter of the Second Amendment.”

At the same time, the President is trying to appease his most rabid gun-opponent backers, who want much stricter measures. The restrictionists seem to have no understanding that criminals, by definition, don’t obey the law. Also being considered are tougher background checks or moves to close what is often called the gun-show loophole. This is unlikely to assuage much of his political base and is certainly not going to halt a prospective murderer or other hard-core criminal.



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The accused in the Tucson shooting had no connection with gun shows, as has been noted by Robert Levy, a lawyer for the plaintiffs in the successful Supreme Court challenge to Washington's handgun ban. Jared Loughner "apparently acquired his firearm at a retail store through a licensed dealer," Levy wrote for CNN.com: "In fact, merely 2% of guns used by criminals are purchased at gun shows. That includes straw purchases, which are already illegal, and purchases through dealers, which are subject to background checks. Nearly all rejected buyers turn out to be false positives. Others, bent on committing crimes, just shop elsewhere, on the black market if necessary."

The President says he believes in the Second Amendment, which one supposes is gracious of him, but in his op-ed he also snidely refers to the beliefs of those who are concerned with Second Amendment liberty as being engaged in "wedge issues and stale political debates."

The crimes on January 8 were the killing of six people and the wounding of 13 others. The response should not be — as is usually the case with gun restrictions — for the federal government to target law-abiding Americans.

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