



Written by on May 12, 2009

Mexican Violence, Gun Controls

Item: *On April 20, Time magazine commemorated the 10th anniversary of the murders at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, with an article on its Time.com site decrying that, over the past decade, “massacres perpetrated by deranged gunmen have continued.” However, said writer Michael Lindenberger, “something odd has occurred. Whatever momentum the Columbine killings gave to gun control has long since petered out.” The Time writer grumbled that “the debate seems to be almost one-sided nowadays, with an ongoing backlash against gun control.”*



Correction: The *Time* writer who complained about one-sidedness in the gun-control “debate” was firing blanks: he gave but one side of the issue — for more controls.

As it happens, the worst shooting incidents in the United States have occurred in areas where the deck has been stacked against armed self-defense. As pointed out by John Lott, a senior research scientist at the University of Maryland and the author of *More Guns, Less Crime*, “All multiple victim public shootings with more than three people killed have occurred where permitted concealed handguns are prohibited.”

Meanwhile, the “90 percent” figure — widely alleged to be the percentage of guns recovered at Mexican crime scenes originating in the United States — is being sprayed around like real machine-gun fire. Very inaccurately, as it turns out.

For example, when President Obama was in Mexico, he said: “More than 90 percent of the guns recovered in Mexico come from the United States, many from gun shops that lay in our shared border.” In similar fashion, Senator Dianne Feinstein, (D-Calif.) griped at a Senate hearing: “It is unacceptable to have 90 percent of the guns that are picked up in Mexico and used to shoot judges, police officers and mayors ... come from the United States.”

That loaded statistic has also been used by, among others, Mexican President Felipe Calderón, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the *Washington Post*, CNN, and innumerable other media outlets, and even an official from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATF) before Congress.

Yet, those figures are wildly overblown. When pressed by William Le Jeunesse and Maxim Lott of Fox News, a spokeswoman for BATF acknowledged that “over 90 percent of the *traced* firearms originated from the United States” — a very different figure. An analysis by Fox revealed that the statistic so favored by the gun grabbers referred only to a much smaller subtotal that Mexico sent to the United States and were successfully traced; it didn’t include the thousands obviously not from the United States that were not submitted to the BATF. As the Fox writers explained:

In 2007-2008, according to ATF Special Agent William Newell, Mexico submitted 11,000 guns to the ATF for tracing. Close to 6,000 were successfully traced — and of those, 90 percent — 5,114 to be exact, according to testimony in Congress by William Hoover — were found to have come from the U.S.

But in those same two years, according to the Mexican government, 29,000 guns were recovered at crime scenes.

In other words, 68 percent of the guns that were recovered were never submitted for tracing. And when you weed out the roughly 6,000 guns that could not be traced from the remaining 32 percent, it means 83 percent of the guns found at crime scenes in Mexico could not be traced to the U.S.

A special agent for United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) named Matt Allen informed Fox News that “the United



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States effort to trace weapons really only extends to weapons that have been in the U.S. market.” In other words, the statistics echoed by one gun-control advocate after another are far wide of their mark, since the large number of weapons seized in Mexico from countries other than the United States were not included in the count.

Second Amendment supporters have been firing back at the phony barrage from the other side. Senator James Inhofe (R-Okla.), for instance, doesn't buy the contention that violence in Mexico justifies stripping Americans of our rights. Says the senator:

The majority of the gun violence that is occurring in the drug wars in Mexico is the result of assault weapons, including fully automatic versions, which aren't even available for sale in the United States. Many of these weapons are coming from other countries in Central and South America and deserters from the Mexican military.

The figure mentioned by Inhofe is a reference to the estimated 150,000 Mexican troops who have deserted in the past six years, many taking their Belgian-made M-16s with them.

The violence in Mexico is being duplicitously used as ammunition by would-be gun controllers in this country. Attorney General Eric Holder is among these. He said not long ago that in order to quell the incidents on the border he would try to reinstate the so-called assault-weapons ban. The ban, since expired, on so-called assault weapons proved of no use in fighting crime. However, that never stops gun-control proponents.

The “assault weapons” covered by the law were nothing of the sort, but merely had some features that looked like military weapons or a magazine that held more than 10 rounds. According to state and local police reports (as cited by the NRA's Institute for Legislative Action), “assault weapons” are used in about 1 percent of murders; by comparison, more than 30 percent of murders are committed with no firearms at all.

To its credit, *Face the Nation* did invite the executive director of the National Rifle Association to offer a rebuttal to the latest gun-ban move. Wayne LaPierre gave 'em both barrels. The legislation in 1994, as he made clear, “was enacted ... on the basis of saying these were machine guns. That's a lie. They were rapid-fire. That's a lie. They made bigger holes. That's a lie. They were more powerful. That's a lie. It was lie after lie after lie,” he said. Concluded LaPierre, “Congress found it out. That's why they let it expire.”

All the same, the Obama transition team admitted that “making the expired federal assault weapons ban permanent” is a goal of the administration.

If you think the assault-weapon ban was a bizarre affront to your rights, take a look at the Blair Holt Act, submitted by Representative Bobby Lee Rush (D-Ill.), who is among the more radical supporters of Barack Obama. The Rush legislation has been aptly summarized by columnist Paul Greenberg:

HR 45 would oblige every gun owner in the country, after being thumb-printed and passing a government-approved training class, to obtain and carry a firearms license bearing passport-sized photo identification. In order to acquire that license, gun owners would have to prove that they have a government-approved storage place for their firearms. Each sale would be recorded by the U.S. government. The licensed gun owner would then face criminal prosecution if he failed to report every firearm he (or she) owns, or if said gun owner changed residence without informing the Attorney General of the United States, or if his firearm were stolen and the theft went unreported. As for you deer, duck or turkey hunters out there, this means, you, too. No exemptions.

There's more, much more. There are so many sweeping provisions in this horse-choker of a bill, space doesn't permit citing all of them. HR 45 is almost Soviet in its sweep.

Rush is familiar with guns, after a fashion. The former Black Panther member spent six months in jail on a weapons charge.

Does this bill have a chance of passing? Not really. Freedom is more likely to be lost by inches, not by feet or yards. However, such overreaching is useful to those pushing other gun grabs whose efforts will appear less radical by comparison.

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