

STATE OF THE UNION

# Assault on weapons

## Violence demands gun restrictions

"It's our right — as Americans, we are free to arm ourselves in any way, shape or form. It's in the Constitution. The framers of the Constitution practically mandated everyone to be armed to defend themselves against a government that delights in socialism and evil and regulation and evil regulation and we hate those communist bastards, and give us freedom through weaponry, uh ... yea, guns!"  
Sheesh.



**BEVERLY MIRELES**  
columnist

People are pretty darned screwed up. This country has thousands of violent deaths by firearms each year, and yet we need more freedom and access to guns? Oh, that makes perfect sense.

It apparently does to the National Rifle Association. Now, not to generalize too much, but those people are insanely fanatical. They will fight any law that encroaches back on gun ownership in any way, even to the point of totally disregarding the best interests of the gun owners themselves, as well as the nation's.

Recently, President Clinton blocked the import of 58 different types of assault rifles, which will affect about 1.6 million guns, saying, "You don't need an Uzi to go deer hunting. You don't need an AK-47 to go skeet shooting."

The NRA's main lobbyist, Tanya Metaksa, countered by arguing the point that Clinton's 1994 assault weapons ban didn't solve the gun problem, and therefore the banning of more assault weapons wouldn't help, either.

Admittedly, Metaksa is correct. This latest piece of weapons legislation will not stop all violence, and it will not solve all the gun problems in the nation. And unfortunately, it only covers gun imports, not those

manufactured in America.

However, it is a step, and however "cosmetic" it might be, it can't hurt. The more that gun manufacturers have to comply to regulations, the better it is, safety-wise.

It's no secret that I am closely allied with the anti-gun crowd. Personally, I find guns ridiculously dangerous, especially considering the mentality of people in general. But I do respect the fact that people enjoy owning them.

Guns for hunting are perfectly acceptable, and so is owning them — within reason. Guns, especially the high powered ones represented by the Uzi and AK-47, aren't really meant to be in the hands of the public. Say what you will, but an AK-47 is not useful in everyday life, unless your everyday life necessitates extreme violence.

That is their draw, of course. Guns that can fire whole magazines at a time are much more interesting than those that can only release one round at a time. They're bigger, louder, more violent, more ... well, you get the drift.

Most of the NRA's pro-gun sound bites focus on the Second Amendment to the Constitution. That, they say, is why they oppose gun regulation — the Second Amendment. They must have read it wrong, because I'm pretty sure the amendment doesn't say that the nation should be armed to the teeth.

The amendment is fairly vague on who is allowed to keep guns and to what extent. Both anti-gun and pro-gun activists use this to fight their battles.

Not surprisingly, none of them are conclusive, generally because the true power of the Constitution is in its interpretation, not in its actual existence.

I doubt any present legislation will end the debate on gun ownership and gun regulation. There will always be gun extremists and anti-gun groups. However, both sides should realize that this country needs restrictions and regulation, otherwise the immense freedom would throw us into chaos.



## Clinton ban serves as an example of manipulation of laws

"This year will go down in history. Our streets will be safer, our police more efficient and the world will follow our lead into the future." Adolf Hitler, announcing his gun control program — 1935

"If we do this ... we chart the right course for America, toward a future more free of fear and a new century brimming with confidence and great promise." Bill Clinton, announcing his gun ban — 1998

Following a 120-day review of import applications for foreign-made firearms to determine their "sporting purpose" as required by the 1968 Gun Control Act, Clinton announced a permanent ban on 58 semi-automatic firearms, not by law, but by executive order.

As Clinton told the Oct. 22, 1997 *Los Angeles Times*, referring to the then-proposed ban, "We are taking the law and bending it as far as we can."

And, as we have learned after five years of stolen FBI files, illegal foreign donations from Chinese Communists and sour Arkansas land deals, Bill Clinton can take the law and bend it like Stretch



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Armstrong.

"Five years ago we made a commitment as an administration to recover our nations' streets from crime and violence," Clinton said in the April 6 Rose Garden ceremony.

He believes the guns are a criminal threat to Americans. Of course, with Clinton's track record on telling the truth, the facts speak otherwise.

"Military-looking" semi-automatic firearms like the 58 banned are used in less than one percent of all crimes before the 1989 and 1994 bans, and the same is true today.

In fact, there are more of these guns available today, yet overall crime is declining. Clearly, these politically-motivated bans do nothing to fight crime and do everything to get candidates like Clinton and Gore elected.

Consider the facts on "assault weapons" and the real causes of crime:

- People are much more likely to be beaten or stabbed to death than the remote, outside chance of being killed by anything which could be referred to as an "assault weapon," 67 times so in just Chicago (FBI, "Crime in the United States 1994.")
- Military-style "assault weapons" are used in fewer than one percent of all violent crime nationwide (Department of Justice, Mar. 1993.) More automobiles are used in the commission of crime

than so-called "assault weapons."

- 65 percent of police officers say gun control is the least effective form of crime fighting and 99 percent report guns do not cause violent crime (Southern States Police Association 1993.)

- Criminals sent to prison serve only one-third of their sentences, averaging 7.7 years for murder and 3.3 years for robbery (*The Washington Times*, Aug. 29, 1989.)

- 70 percent of murders are committed by criminals with prior felonies (Bureau of Justice Statistics Oct. 1991.)

Besides the fact these guns do not play a role in criminal activity and banning never has and never will fight crime, the banned imports are useful in ways an anti-Second Amendment "sporting purposes test" can not encompass. They are part of gun collectors' displays and popular target-shooting pieces, both of which are the furthest thing from criminal activity.

Not only do these guns not cause crime, they fight it.

During the 1992 Los Angeles riots, scores were killed and stores and shops were looted and burned to the ground.

Those of Korean shopkeepers, however, avoided significant harm. They kept their businesses and their lives because they were armed with

semi-automatic rifles exactly like the 58 banned, perfect for self-defense in mob and riot situations.

Had Bill Clinton been Governor of California and enacted his latest gun ban, these men would be lying in graves and their shops would be charred rubble.

The latest Clinton gun ban on 58 imported semi-automatic firearms can in no way whatsoever fight crime.

These safe, legal firearms are responsible for fewer than one-tenth of one percent of all crime in the United States (more Americans die of bee stings than by the banned guns — maybe Clinton should consider a ban on beekeepers.)

The myth of the drug dealer and gangster on a crime spree with an "assault weapon" is just that — a myth generated by Hollywood studios and TV shows.

Despite their use in TV and movies, criminologists Daniel Polsby and Dennis Brennen prove find no police officer has ever been killed by an Uzi. To put it frankly, gun control is a product of people who watch too much TV.

If Bill Clinton wanted to fight crime, he failed.

If he wanted to look good on TV while duping an unsuspecting public, has was a resounding success.

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PERSPECTIVES

## Third anniversary of Oklahoma bombing still brings vivid memories

When my senior English teacher asked us to write about our feelings three days after the event, my blank notebook mirrored the numbness and disorientation inside. Now three years later, the same feelings return near the third anniversary of the day 168 fellow Oklahomans lost their lives in the deadliest terrorist attack ever in U.S. soil.

April 19, 1995, began as the proverbial "day like any other day" at Midwest City High School, five miles east of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. At 9:03 a.m., a Ryder truck packed with fertilizer and diesel fuel exploded on the street adjacent to the federal courthouse.

Although I didn't hear it (I was asleep in AP Government), several of my classmates heard what sounded like a sonic boom — not an unusual occurrence at a school a mile north of an air force base. "They bombed the courthouse!" Nancy told me as she left the office where she is an aide first period. I wasn't all that concerned at first because it was old news — loonies are always blowing up buildings in New York or Los Angeles.

It became clear, however, that she meant our



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courthouse when I saw students and faculty flocking to one of the second-floor windows facing downtown.

We ignored the class bell as we stood transfixed by an enormous cloud of black smoke billowing into the rough mushroom shape seen in films of atomic bomb tests from the '50s. We finally returned to our classrooms to watch live reports from the dozens of news crews and helicopters in the area.

The scene looked more like Beirut or Sarajevo than the "Heartland" of America: firemen climbed piles of rubble, dazed survivors stumbled around with bloody shirts wrapped around their heads, arms or legs, ambulances converged from every part of the city.

The blast had destroyed the facade of the building, allowing a Barbie's playhouse view of the separate floors. The air was thick with acrid smoke, hideous shrieks, cries of onlookers, police barking orders and every variety of siren sounding at once.

One man tottered down the sidewalk, blood on his face, declaring that he was heading home — only he didn't know where that might be and couldn't remember his name. Several children wandered from the day care center looking for their parents. Many more children remained buried in the rubble of the day care center — one of the hardest hit sections of the building. An onlooker took a picture later seen on the cover of *Time* of a firefighter carrying the lifeless body of one of the many preschool-age victims.

My mom was a legal secretary in a law firm down-

town, but I wasn't sure if she ever went to the Murrah building. I was enraged and frightened by the possibility that my mother could be under the smoking rubble until I was relieved beyond words to hear her voice on the phone telling me she was safe and had not been near the blast. She left work immediately after the explosion, right before downtown was sealed to allow the unending stream of ambulances a traffic-free journey to hospitals all over the metropolitan area.

Rescue workers worked nonstop for the next week removing bodies and still hoping for survivors. Others helped in any way they could, by donating food and clothing, counseling victims and rescue workers, or praying. Donations flowed in from the rest of the country and from concerned people from around the globe.

My church was devastated by the loss of five people very close to our congregation. Two of the girls in my youth group lost their fathers in the bombing and one family lost a daughter and a granddaughter.

Oklahoma City was a different place for the next few months as people resumed only a good imitation of normal activity — everyone still had their minds on the victims and the suspect in custody. The implosion of the remainder of the Murrah building brought some closure to the tragedy for Oklahomans, but the effects of the tragedy will be felt for many years to come.

A natural response to a tragedy of this magnitude is to look for a reason for the meaningless suffering, a moral to the story.

Gun control and other "tough-on-crime" lobbyists invariably blame the lack of adequate measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring the means for such an attack. When fertilizer can be purchased for only \$10 for a 30-pound bag at any feed store and diesel fuel is readily available, however, law enforcement officials have few tools to stop madmen bent on destruction.

Like the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., JFK and Robert Kennedy, the Oklahoma City bombing is another testament to the power that one man with plenty of hate and very little technical know-how can wield over the rest of society. It is also a testament to the power of a tragedy to bring people together. Oklahomans and indeed Americans have a new sense of brotherhood because of our mutual suffering through a devastating event.

Mandy is a student whose father fell victim to the bombing. He would have been helping her to prepare for finals or attending her school's Parents' Weekend, but his life was cut short by the actions of one man. On the third anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing, let us remember the victims and survivors to stop another tragedy of this magnitude from ever occurring again.

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