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October 16, 2012

Dear Friends,

Recently Mexican President Felipe Calderon condemned U.S. gun laws as 'mistaken' after the shooting at the theater in Aurora, Colorado. Cong. Lautenberg from New Jersey and New York City Mayor Bloomberg called for stricter gun laws.

While the supposed goal of the disarmers is gun control, or ammunition control, the real target is people control.

As it happens, the New York City mayor can't even control himself. In this case of Bloomberg's shooting from the lip, he quickly found himself trying to walk back his own words, attempting to explain that when he went on television and publicly called for a police strike he did not "mean literally go on strike." Oh.

What he was pushing for was, in fact, illegal. As James Taranto of Opinion-Journal.com (*Wall Street Journal*) put it: Mayor Bloomberg's proposed police strike "would be for the purpose of curtailing the citizenry's constitutional rights. The mayor urged an unlawful rebellion by government employees against their employers, the people."

Taranto further observed that whether the mayor meant to make a real or an empty threat to suggest a police strike, "it seems obvious that such a move would be counterproductive. The prospect of police shirking their duty to protect the citizenry strengthens, not weakens, the case for private ownership of firearms and other tools of self-defense."

Most top police officials, thankfully, don't buy the mayor's contentions. A 2010 survey of the National Association of the Chiefs of Police revealed that fully 95 percent believe that "any law-abiding citizen [should] be able to purchase a firearm for sport or self-defense." The same survey found that 77 percent of the chiefs agree that concealed-handgun permits that were issued in one state should be recognized by others in much the same fashion as driver's licenses.

Mexican presidents don't have to worry about such things as the Second Amendment's constitutionally protected right to keep and bear arms. As a result, it is very difficult for Mexicans to own weapons legally. Of course, the illegal drug cartels in Mexico pay little attention to laws, and the 50,000 or so people who have died in the war against narcotics in that country are beyond caring.

In a well-documented piece in the *National Interest*, Ted Galen Carpenter has pointed out that the extensive research on restrictive gun laws in the United States and foreign jurisdictions shows no correlation between tough laws and a decline in homicides and other crimes. Mexico's own experience confirms that point. Following sometimes violent radical leftist challenges to the government in the late 1960's, Mexico enacted some of the strictest gun-control measures in the world.

Today, it is nearly impossible for a civilian to legally possess a handgun or rifle in that country. Yet such tough restrictions have done nothing to disarm the drug gangs. In fact, those measures may have made it easier for cartel enforcers to terrorize portions of the country, since they don't have to worry much about law-abiding civilians being armed and able to defend themselves and their families.

President Obama also added to the rhetorical crossfire with his remarks within days of the Colorado shooting (where the alleged gunman used a semi-automatic AR-15 rifle – whose clip apparently jammed – a 12-gauge shotgun, and a semi-automatic pistol). The president left the impression, perhaps deliberately, that the weapon involved was an AK-47, a Soviet-made military rifle capable of fully automatic fire.

Said the president to the National Urban League in Chicago; "A lot of gun owners would agree that AK-47s belong in the hands of soldiers, not in the hands of criminals. They belong on the battlefield of war, not on the streets of our cities." In fact, such automatic weapons have long been banned in this country, and AK-47s are not even in the normal arsenal of American troops – a point the commander-in-chief ought to know.

Would the victims in the Colorado shooting be alive if only another law had been passed – beyond all of those that were broken in the killings? That's an extremely dubious proposition.

Would it have mattered if there were yet another law against setting up a network of booby-trapped bombs, as the police found in the suspect's residence? James Holmes, the suspect in the Aurora tragedy, had "passed a background check," pointed out Robert VanBruggen in national Review Online, and his "worst prior infraction was a traffic ticket." While it is true, VanBruggen wrote, that one of Holmes's guns was a so-called "assault weapon" similar to an AR-15, this gun does not differ from standard hunting rifles in most of the important ways. Holmes's rifle fires at a semiautomatic rate – one bullet for each pull of the trigger, unlike a machine gun, which fires continuously when the trigger is held down – and uses .223-caliber ammo. This ammo is frequently found in "varmint rifles"; it is on the small side even for shooting deer.

Despite repeated mass media references to the contrary, the AR-15 is not a true assault weapon; it does not have full-automatic firing capabilities. Indeed, the use of the larger magazine in the Colorado incident arguably might have saved some lives since it seemed to have jammed the rifle. In any event, it only takes a second or two, with practice, to swap magazines for reloading, a point generally ignored by those who would ban larger clips.

Limiting the size of magazines, as the expired federal law aimed at accomplishing, would like be pointless. As columnist Steve Chapman has pointed out: The brief interruption a killer needs for reloading is helpful only if someone can seize the moment to subdue him – something more common in movies than in real life. Florida State University criminologist Gary Kleck says he knows of only one mass shooting in which that happened, in 1993. In the 2011 Tucson shooting, the suspect was overcome when his gun jammed after he reloaded.

Tracking anyone who makes large ammunition purchases? David Kopel, research director at the free-market Independence Institute in Denver, points out that more than a billion rounds are sold each year in the United States – many of them in bulk by target shooters who burn through hundreds or thousands every month.

If the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were to investigate each of these buyers, it would have little time to do anything else. And it would probably catch no criminals, since they would buy in smaller lots to avoid detection.

The calamity of the mass murder would be made worse if the crimes led to heavy-handed and unconstitutional reactions – which wouldn't work as promised. John Lott, author of *More Guns, Less Crime* (expanded third edition, University of Chicago Press, 2010), has facts to support his reasoning. This stands in marked contrast to the emotional appeals of the would-be banners who can't stand to see a crisis go to waste (to paraphrase Rahm Emanuel, the mayor of Chicago and the former chief of staff of the Obama White House).

Lott has laid out the proofs in a piece published by Fox News in which he observes that “no published peer-reviewed studies by economists or criminologists find the original federal or state assault-weapons ban reduced murder or overall violent crime.” Since that federal law expired in September 2004, “murder and overall violent-crime rates have actually fallen. In 2003, the last full year before the law expired, the U.S. murder rate was 5.7 per 100,000 people. Initial data for 2011 shows that the murder rate has fallen to 4.7 per 100,000 people.”

The imposition of tougher restrictions on firearms has not been anything close to a solution to gun violence in Europe. As Lott observed: In last year's shooting near Oslo, 69 people were killed and an additional 110 injured. Germany, a country with some of the strictest gun control in the world – it requires not only extensive psychological screening but also a year's wait to get a gun – has been the site of three of the worst five multiple-victim K-12 public school shootings in the world, all in the past decade. There are more examples of attacks in countries with strict gun control, like in Austria, Britain, France, Finland and Italy.

Most of the weapons used overseas were obtained illegally, which should hardly be a surprise. Lott also stated that there has generally been a common feature with public shootings in the United States in which there are multiple victims: With just a single exception, the attack in Tucson last year [in which Representative Gabrielle Giffords (D-Ariz.) was among those shot], every public shooting in the U.S. in which more than three people have been killed since at least 1950 has occurred in a place where citizens are not allowed to carry their own firearms...

All the public mass shootings in Europe fit this rule.

In fact, if someone had a legal weapon in the theater (which was a gun-free zone) in Aurora, the outcome might well have been different. Yet Barack Obama's personal agenda over the years is disquieting. That record, as summarized by the NRA's Institute for Legislative Action, has included the following: Endorsing a total ban on the manufacture, sale and possession of all handguns; a ban on the sale or transfer of all semi-automatic firearms; the backing of a 500 percent increase in federal taxes on guns and ammunition; voting to ban single-shot, over-under and side-by-side shotguns; and stating that the right of lawful citizens to carry a firearm for personal protection should be banned nationwide. He has even supported efforts to prohibit Americans from keeping a gun in their own homes for self-defense.

One thing you will not notice on that list is a history of enhancing the liberties of the law-abiding citizenry. The assault on the Second Amendment is unrelenting.

Regards,

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