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Self-defense report cheered by Second Amendment advocates

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While the Obama administration has been working fast, furiously, and [surreptitiously](#) to [limit](#) Second Amendment rights, Americans have been busy exercising those rights in record numbers. In 2011 the [FBI](#) ran 16,454,951 firearm background checks, an increase of over 2 million, or 14.2%, versus 2010 (and 29.5% more than in 2008). The number of such checks in the month of December 2011 alone, 1,862,327, was 22% higher than the next highest month on record.

The trend appears to be holding. In January 2012, FBI firearm background checks totaled 1,377,301 -- more than any previous January on record. During the past ten years, the Bureau has conducted 114.8 million firearm background checks.

The right of law-abiding citizens to bear arms is essential to liberty on both a micro and macro level. One of the fundamental [reasons](#) for that right is self-defense. As the saying goes, when seconds count, the police are only minutes away. That's not a knock against the brave men and women in blue, rather it is a realistic reminder that protecting one's self, family, and property is foremost a personal responsibility.

Last week, Cato Institute released an interesting new study titled *Tough Targets: When Criminals Face Armed Resistance from Citizens*. A related Cato blog post is [here](#), a summary is [here](#), and the 58-page white paper is [here](#). Study authors Clayton Cramer and David Burnett examined, among other things, news accounts of defensive uses of guns during the past eight years. As the report points out, many incidents of defensive gun use do not involve discharge of the weapon, and the propensity of the media and anti-gun activists is to mostly disregard such occurrences. Another of the insights is that when a gun is used for defensive purposes, usually more than one crime is prevented.

The Cato report concludes that the average American citizen is capable of competently employing a firearm for defensive purposes and, at a minimum, tens of thousands of crimes are prevented each year by citizens doing just that. Corresponding risks, such as accidents and situations where a criminal commandeers a gun from a defender, are overstated.

As has been written by [Mark Steyn](#) and others, gun control is not about guns, it is about control, facts and Constitution be damned. For those inclined to split constitutional conservatism into distinct categories -- claiming one and conveniently disavowing another under the assumption of no interconnectedness -- I am reminded of a passage in the book *Resurgent* wherein the authors wrote:

"...gun rights are unquestionably a social issue. The Second Amendment right [of law-abiding citizens] to keep and bear arms goes to the heart of American traditions and our American identity. If gun ownership is not a social issue, then we don't know what is..."