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Mass murders don't happen at gun ranges

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Don't let this crisis go to waste, as an adviser to President Barack Obama once suggested.

Obama and the gun-control crowd may be the gun industry's most effective salesmen. Whenever a bad guy shoots to death more than one innocent person, multitudes of innocent people understand intuitively they have another reason to arm themselves in self-protection. The president then threatens to make gun ownership illegal, kicking sales into even higher gear.

The media reflexively trumpet Obama's gun-law solutions. Perhaps this explains Gallup pollsters discovering last week that a scant 40 percent of Americans have "a great deal" or "a fair amount" of trust in the media. Those aren't just jaded old folk lied to for decades. For Americans ages 18-49, trust is even lower: 36 percent.

Let's test the Obama solution, which boils down to "we need a law" to prevent gun massacres. Will 10,001 laws be enough? It's not an idle question. It's estimated that America has 10,000 federal and state gun laws. Shall we add another? Will one more law do what countless others have failed to do?

How about a real-life experiment? Impose gun-restrictive laws someplace, and see how the results compare with somewhere else where legal gun ownership is encouraged and widespread. Surely that will prove Obama's gun-control approach is superior. Well, not exactly.

Nowhere in America are there more or more-stringent restrictions on gun sales and ownership than in Obama's hometown of Chicago, with mandated background checks, outright bans and limits on bullet magazine capacity. Yet gun murder rates in Chicago are astronomical. In northern Texas, which may have as well-armed a private citizenry as you'll find in America, gun crimes are infinitesimally few.

Is this a uniquely American phenomenon? Not exactly. Since Australia's 1996 gun ban that included buying back 631,000 guns from owners, the Land Down Under has sunken to resemble

Chicago far more than Plano, Texas. Murders have increased 19 percent, assaults with guns 28 percent and armed robberies 69 percent.

What's the lesson?

Except for the ideologically and willfully blind, the lesson is that, when bad guys with guns know good guys won't have guns, the bad guys do what bad guys do: murder, assault and rob.

This goes to the heart of the absurd concept of "gun-free zones." When someone is intent on murder, he hunts for helpless prey. Gun-free zones effectively paint bulls-eyes on every unarmed, defenseless potential victim within the zone.

If memory serves, none of America's mass murder sprees took place at a shooting range. Just as rare are mass murders at police stations, gun shows and gun stores. That's because people in those places have guns, unlike gun-free zones' human clay pigeons.

The gun-control lobby insists that, just like criminals, law-abiding people can't be trusted with guns because accidents happen. But if you don't know how to safely handle a gun, there are two obvious options: Get safety lessons, or don't get a gun.

The idea that extremely rare accidental gunshot deaths justify disarming America is foolishness on steroids. Countless murders, rapes, assaults and robberies are prevented by ordinary people wielding guns, as documented in the Cato Institute study, "Tough Targets, When Criminals Face Armed Resistance from Citizens." That doesn't include incidents unreported to police or to the media in which criminals fled after discovering their intended victims were armed.

If we disarm Americans, what recourse is left when lawbreakers, who, by definition, don't obey gun laws, go on murderous rampages or even run-of-the-mill crime sprees? Would gun-averse politicians deign to permit Americans to arm themselves with swords? Pen knives? Tennis racquets?

Unless government confiscates 300 million legally owned guns, we are going to live with what the Second Amendment identifies as a constitutional right, and what common sense tells us is the best self-defense against those who would harm us. Unless government devises mind-reading capabilities to identify and quarantine the mentally deranged among us, we are going to live with the possibility that some weird fellow someday will snap and go on a rampage. We are blessed in this country, at least so far, that gun confiscations and weirdo roundups haven't been authorized. And as demonstrated, the weirdos don't attack people who are armed.

Gun-control advocates will protest if yours truly plays the Hitler card. So, we won't. We'll play the Hitler-Mao-Stalin-Pol Pot-Castro card. It is a historical truth that a citizenry must be disarmed to advance despotism. As the American Revolution neared, one of the first British decisions was to seize Colonists' guns.

We know armed, law-abiding people are least likely to be victims when evil strikes, whether it's a deranged loner or government storm trooper. Contrary to progressive ideology, evil does exist. It won't be banished by gun laws. But we are not to accommodate evil by effectively committing suicide when it confronts us.