



11350 Random Hills Road, Suite 800, Fairfax, Virginia 22030 Phone (703) 934-6101 Fax (703) 352-3678

fff@fff.org www.fff.org

Book Review **by George C. Leef**

Guns, Freedom, and Terrorism by Wayne LaPierre (Nashville, Tenn.: WND Books, 2003); 246 pages; \$24.99.

Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. Nowhere is that phrase proven to be true more often than in the unending battle between those in our society who believe that the way to reduce violence is to take away from individual persons the freedom to own firearms and those who are convinced that the consequence of disarming honest people would be a terrible increase in violence. The so-called gun controllers are constantly battering the public with disinformation that helps advance their agenda. Consider this recent example of the art of deceptive statistical manipulation in the service of opinion bending.

A study published in the *Annals of Emergency Medicine* concluded that you greatly increase the likelihood of dying from a gunshot wound if you keep a gun in your home. Quickly, that scary factoid was making the rounds in the media and on the Internet. Having a gun around, apparently, is like eating uncooked poultry — a foolish and needless risk that no sensible person would think of taking.

But drawing that conclusion from the data in the study was completely illogical. All that it showed was a correlation between gun ownership and death from gunshots. As it so happens, a large proportion of victims of shootings are themselves criminals, who usually have guns, of course. The correlation between gun ownership and suffering gunshot wounds appears strong only because a high percentage of gun-owners are frequently doing very dangerous things. The gun-control crowd was delighted to say that it had new proof that owning a gun “increases the odds” that a person who buys a gun for defensive or sporting purposes will be shot, but in fact the study proved nothing of the sort.

With anti-gun dementia running rampant in the United States, Wayne LaPierre’s new book, *Guns, Freedom, and Terrorism*, is a welcome counterweight. LaPierre, who is the president

of the National Rifle Association, has written a book that surveys the broad field of anti-gun argumentation and gives the reader cogent refutations to every gun-control canard.

Moreover, and I find this to be the book's best feature of all, LaPierre looks at the results of the severe anti-gun policies that have been put in place in England and Australia. His conclusion (which, unlike the study mentioned above, does logically follow from the data) is that when you disarm the population, the consequence is an increase in crime and violence. For Americans who have absorbed the continuous outpouring of anti-gun disinformation, the book will come as a shock, since it shows not only that "the other side" has good arguments but that the case for gun control is an intellectual house of cards.

The word "terrorism" in the title refers to the maddening propensity for the anti-gun forces to seize upon any pretext for a new assault on Second Amendment rights. The most recent pretext, of course, is terrorism. On October 1, 2001, for example, the Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence issued a press release saying,

Stronger gun laws must be a part of any plan to reduce the threat of terrorism in our nation. Keeping guns out of the hands of those who wish to harm us at home requires the same policies that can keep guns out of the hands of criminals.

Politicians who court the votes of Americans who are scared witless at the very thought of firearms quickly jumped in with claims that terrorists were buying weapons at the dreaded gun shows. LaPierre adroitly squashes that nonsense by quoting the editor of *Arab-American News*, who noted that

Hezbollah is getting millions of dollars from Iran. They have plenty of weapons. They don't need a few shotguns from Dearborn.

The anti-gun organizations and politicians know that terrorists do not need to bother buying an odd assortment of weapons at gun shows when they can smuggle in large quantities of the precise weapons and munitions they desire. When you're interested in taking advantage of people's fear, however, the truth is of little consequence.

An individual right of self-defense

Speaking of the Second Amendment, *Guns, Freedom, and Terrorism* contains an excellent chapter on the ongoing battle over the meaning of that amendment. Gun-control zealots are fond of saying that the Second Amendment does not really protect any individual right to acquire and own firearms. A few legal scholars have made names for themselves by peddling the pathetic argument that the Second Amendment merely confers a "collective right" on units of government

to have armed forces on hand. LaPierre shows that that conceit is completely at odds with the beliefs of the Founders and that it has been rebuked by the Fifth Circuit's decision in *United States v. Emerson*, where the court said,

We find that the history of the Second Amendment reinforces the plain meaning of its text, namely that it protects individual Americans in their right to keep and bear arms.

The only point that I wish the author had added here is that if the Founders had meant for the government to have the authority to control or prohibit the ownership of weapons, they would have included it in the affirmative grant of power to Congress in Article 1, Section 8. Read that section and you will fail to see anything even remotely suggesting that Congress is authorized to legislate away the right to own a gun.

Gun opponents like to pretend that guns are almost never used defensively. Bring that argument up with one of them and you'll get a condescending, bemused look that says, "So you actually believe that mythology. . . ." Our author shows, however, that it isn't mythology. People in fact have used guns to stop criminals from committing their heinous acts and LaPierre recounts several episodes in detail, contrasting cases where citizens were fortunate enough to have weapons at hand when murderers began shooting sprees with cases where no one was armed — except, of course, the criminals. Where the people were defenseless, the killers shot many; where someone was armed, the killers were quickly stopped and lives were saved. After reading this chapter ("The Right to Carry: Trusting Citizens with Firearms"), only the most close-minded could still maintain that it is just a myth that people can and do use guns to stop crime.

Other topics that LaPierre covers include the media's campaign of disinformation regarding guns and gun control; the controversy over the flagrantly dishonest book *Arming America*, by Michael Bellesiles (which culminated in the author's being forced to resign his professorship when it came to light that his research purporting to show that firearms were rare in early America was fraudulent); lawsuits against gun manufacturers; and the use of junk science by the medical profession to create the false impression that guns are so dangerous that ordinary citizens should no longer be allowed to own them. But the most telling chapters of all are, I believe, those on the experiences of Australia and Great Britain, which vividly show the truth of the statement "When guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns."

Results of gun control

In 1996, a deranged killer in Tasmania killed 35 people with firearms he had stolen. Immediately, anti-gun groups went into action, demanding governmental action. Thanks to previous legislation that required the registration of firearms, the government had an easy time of it when a new law was passed requiring that all firearms owners turn their guns in to be

destroyed. Australians parted with guns, some of which were family heirlooms. Prime Minister John Howard crowed about this great accomplishment, saying,

Ordinary citizens should not have weapons. We do not want the American disease imported into Australia.

Since then, there has been a dramatic increase in crime in Australia, but that government's focus remains on confiscating the remaining privately owned firearms in the country, not on dealing with the surge of criminality. As is the logic of most government programs, the problems are never due to the programs themselves, but to the fact that they haven't been pushed far enough.

Similarly in Britain, a terrible killing led to panicky legislation to ban guns. The government seized more than 162,000 privately owned guns in 1997–98, with Prime Minister Tony Blair leading the charge for official obliteration of “the dangerous gun culture.” Naturally, the people were now much safer. But a funny thing happened — a wave of crime. “Almost immediately,” LaPierre writes, “the level of violence and the brutal nature of that violence exploded against the disarmed civil population.”

Despite the dramatic rise in crime, the government still considers the *victim* who uses a gun in his own defense to be more of a social offender than the *criminal* who attacks him. In one stunning case, the government actually gave financial assistance to a burglar who had been wounded by a property owner to help him sue the man for having shot him during the attempted burglary. Oh yes — the property owner was also sentenced to seven years imprisonment for the crime of using a gun to defend himself.

The belief that crime will decrease once government disarms honest citizens is one of the great contemporary delusions. There are a great many Americans who have succumbed to it. Congratulations to Wayne LaPierre for a book that clearly shows it to be a delusion and that gives a vigorous defense of the moral and constitutional right to own and use guns for nonaggressive purposes.

George C. Leef is the director of the Pope Center for Higher Education Policy in Raleigh, North Carolina, and book review editor of [The Freeman](#).

This article was originally published in the February 2004 edition of *Freedom Daily*.