



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on March 31, 2014

Detroit: Fatal Self-defense Shootings Up, Crime Down

On Tuesday morning, March 25, two young men trying to break into a home on Detroit's west side woke the homeowner, who went outside to investigate. The confrontation led to a fight, during which the homeowner drew his sidearm in self-defense and killed both attackers. This brings to 10 the number of fatal self-defense shootings in Detroit so far this year, which could certainly exceed the total of 25 recorded in the city for 2012, the latest year for which data are available.



Meanwhile, as justifiable homicides are on the rise in Detroit, violent crime correspondingly continues to decline — just as new Police Chief James Craig noted back in January. At a press conference following the most recent self-defense shooting, he stated:

It does appear that more and more Detroiters are becoming empowered. More and more Detroiters are getting sick of the violence. I know of no other place where I've see this number of justifiable homicides.

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People who are faced with a dangerous situation are taking matters into their own hands. We're not advocating violence; we're advocates of not being victims. We're advocates of self-protection. We want people to be safe.

This should be a message to those who continue to perpetuate violence on Detroiters that enough is enough.... Detroiters are fed up and they are taking action.

A 35-year veteran law enforcement officer, Craig started his career in Detroit as a beat cop; moved to Los Angeles; then to Portland, Maine; on to Cincinnati; and then back to Detroit as chief of police. Upon taking office last June, he announced his intention to do something about Detroit's spiraling crime rate:

No longer will we stand idly by as criminals run rampant and the good citizens are held captive in their own homes.

Gone are the days that a citizen calls 911 and there is no response. Gone are the days that a citizen comes to a precinct only to find that the doors are locked.

We have taken an oath to protect our citizens and protect them is what we will do.

He kept his promise, and on January 3, 2014 he reported that criminal homicides had dropped by 14 percent and that violent crime had dropped seven percent. When he was asked if he knew of any instances of the so-called knockout game in Detroit, Craig raised some hackles with his answer:

I think folks — the people who would engage in that foolishness — probably know that there are a number of CPL [Concealed Pistol License] holders running around the streets of Detroit. [They] probably [will decide that's] not a real good idea.

When pressed on the issue of concealed pistol licenses being granted to Detroiters, Craig responded, "I think it's a deterrent. Good Americans with CPLs translates into crime reduction, too. I learned that



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very quickly in the state of Maine [where there are] a lot of CPL holders.”

Earlier in March Craig was in the spotlight when another attempted home invasion was thwarted by an armed homeowner, leading to the death of a suspect. In an interview on WDIV-TV, Craig said,

A lot of good Detroiters are fed up. The message should be that ... people are going to protect themselves....

If you are confronted with an immediate threat to your safety, you're not going to have time to dial 911. It becomes an issue of “the threat is here, I have to respond to the threat.”

And then, speaking directly to anyone considering breaking and entering, Craig added:

Suspects in Detroit need to worry about a couple of things. [You've] got to worry about a police department that is going to aggressively find you when you commit an act of violence.

And you've got to also worry about the good Detroiters who are not going to put up with [your] violence.

That message is flowing down from Craig's office to his officers on the street. When a homeowner heard glass breaking in a window in his home a little after noon on Thursday, March 6, he ran around to his driveway to confront the suspect. During that confrontation the homeowner drew his firearm and killed him. Following the incident, Deputy Chief Rodney Johnson said, “[This is] a message to criminals: Stop coming into people's homes unannounced and uninvited. Crime no longer pays in the city of Detroit.”

Last week Craig was challenged over his statements that responsible Detroiters should arm and defend themselves by a local resident, Sandra Hines. At the Board of Police Commissioners meeting, Hines complained that Craig's position could lead to “vigilantism.” Craig responded,

I did, in fact, say that good Americans, good Detroiters, if responsible, could get CPLs and that it could — emphasis on the word could — be a deterrent to violent crime. I said that because of my experience in four cities, having seen good Americans and good Detroiters that have CCWs [carrying concealed weapons permits], and what effect it has had on deterring violent crime.

In fact, there's been research ... by the Department of Justice and some scholars that armed citizens, good citizens, can have a deterring effect on violent crime....

I do not condone vigilantism. I don't support individuals arming themselves and doing the work of police officers. Police officers are trained to enforce the law.... I do see that a concealed weapon is an opportunity for self-protection only; not to go out and enforce the law.

Detroiters are increasingly defending themselves against attackers. On February 17, a woman was threatened in her home by three teenagers who kicked in her front door. She opened fire, ending the attack and holding them until the police arrived. On February 22, a woman was surprised by a gunman when she pulled her car into her garage. She was able to retrieve her own weapon and then she fatally shot the intruder. That same day, when two men broke into a home on Detroit's west side, the homeowner opened fire, killing one and scaring off the other. On March 7, a woman shot and killed a man trying to enter her home through her back window.

None of these shootings was a case of “vigilantism,” of course — just ordinary homeowners defending themselves. Earlier Craig said that carrying concealed weapons “could” reduce crime. Now he can safely say that it already has.



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