



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on June 16, 2016

Bill O'Reilly Calls for Gun Control

A horrific event such as the mass shooting in Orlando early last Sunday tends to reveal where politicians and political commentators really stand on the issues of liberty and the Constitution. This has certainly been the case with Bill O'Reilly, host of highly ranked Fox cable show *The Factor*.

O'Reilly, as is his practice, made a pretense of being "fair and balanced" by offering some criticism of liberal politicians, before he launched his attack on what he called "right-wing responsibility" for the massacre, which left 49 people dead and even more wounded in the Orlando gay nightclub Pulse.



An analysis of his remarks reveals the intellectual bankruptcy of those who seriously argue that increased gun control will be either effective or constitutional.

"The FBI and other federal agencies need the power to stop suspected terrorists and other evildoers from buying weapons," O'Reilly insisted.

We already have criminal background checks. The Islamic terrorist Omar Mateen, who carried out the massacre in Orlando, passed those checks when he purchased his weapons. So one must ask what is meant by the term "suspected terrorist." The FBI certainly "suspected" Mateen of being a terrorist; however, after investigating him, they had closed their file on him. If the FBI considered Mateen a strong enough "suspect" to stop him from making a gun buy, then why did they close his file?

In the United States, a "suspect" is a person who has not yet been convicted of any crime. Their being considered a suspect is not enough to strip them of their constitutional rights. Certainly, the FBI could have kept Mateen under surveillance, but unless he committed a violent crime, FBI personnel had no constitutional authority to prevent him from buying a weapon. Just who will make this decision to keep other Americans from legally purchasing a firearm? Simply handing such a power over to the FBI is clearly unconstitutional. And no act of Congress can make it constitutional.

One must also remember that someone would have to define just what persons are suspected "terrorists," and therefore are subject to having their constitutional rights nullified. After all, some liberals consider Tea Party types, NRA members, and anti-immigrant activists potential terrorists. Furthermore, just what would constitute an "evildoer" in the eyes of the Obama White House?

O'Reilly argued, "Also, gun dealers all across America should be required to report the sale of certain kinds of guns, heavy weapons, directly to the FBI.... That is a sane approach and would make it a lot tougher for the Omar Mateens of the world to get the weaponry to kill." However, what exactly what would the FBI then have done with this information? They had already closed their file on Mateen.

And what about other Americans — law-abiding citizens — who are simply exercising their constitutional right to obtain a legal weapon? Does the Fox News host want the FBI to visit all these gun purchasers, or just monitor them? It is unclear exactly what good such an invasive policy would do.



O'Reilly further opined,

There is too much gun crime in the USA, and high-powered weaponry is too easy to get. We all have the right to bear arms, but we don't have the right to buy and maintain mortars. Even if you feel threatened by gangsters or a New World Order. No bazookas, no Sherman tanks, no hand grenades.

So far, no terrorist has used a Sherman tank to carry out his murderous activities. O'Reilly's snarky comment about a "New World Order" is an insult to those Americans who understand what is the real purpose of the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms: *It is a last line of defense against a tyrannical government.* His slur about the New World Order is clearly intended to mock such an idea, because a "New World Order" global government would almost certainly be a tyranny that will have replaced our present constitutional republic, and our national sovereignty.

Another Fox News host, Gretchen Carlson, echoed O'Reilly. "Do we need AR-15s to hunt and kill deer?" she asked, adding that Mateen was able to kill so many people "because he was firing an AR-15, a military-style assault weapon."

One must remember that at the time of the American Revolution, the "shot heard 'round the world" was fired with what was then a "military-style" weapon. (And it was an unregistered firearm, for that matter.)

O'Reilly actually had it right back on January 6, after the San Bernardino, California, terrorist attack, when he pointed out, "The truth is, terrorists are not going to submit themselves to background checks — neither are dangerous felons or insane people. They are not going to sign any paper when they buy a gun.... They will buy their guns on the black market. And no registration law will prevent that."

Those words were true then, and they are still true today. Yet, O'Reilly's remarks in the wake of the Orlando shootings have swung in favor of curtailing the liberties of all Americans. In support of his new position, he mutilates the meaning of the Second Amendment. One can safely assume that James Madison did not author it so that Gretchen Carlson or anyone else could shoot a deer. And neither would Madison agree with O'Reilly's erroneous interpretation of it.

O'Reilly stated, "The Second Amendment clearly states the government has a right to regulate militias, made up of individuals. They have that right in the name of public safety. Therefore, Congress should debate what kind of weapons should be available for public sale."

Actually, the Second Amendment states, "The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed," and infringement is exactly what O'Reilly is now advocating. It is amazing that anyone can read the Second Amendment and honestly conclude that it gives Congress the power to decide what type of weapons should be available for public sale.

To argue, as some do, that the Second Amendment protects only the right of Americans to keep and bear smooth-bore muskets or Pennsylvania rifles (because those were the types of weapons available in 1791, when the Bill of Rights was ratified) is an argument a child might make. After all, should the First Amendment be restricted to protection for the printing presses of the 18th century, as well, and not be interpreted to include modern means of communication such as television, radio, and the Internet?

Steve Byas is a professor of history at Randall University in Moore, Oklahoma. His book History's Greatest Libels is a challenge to some of the great lies of history, wherein he defends such persons as



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