



## Wall Street Journal: “How Many Guns Do Americans Own?”

In an improbable article from an unlikely source, *Wall Street Journal* writer Joel Eastwood asks an impertinent question, [“How Many Guns Do Americans Own?”](#) Eastwood answers the rhetorical question himself: No one knows because of a lack of a central database. “With no central database,” he states, those interested in finding out “are left to make their own tallies.”



Not surprisingly, among those interested making guesses is the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). Eastwood reported that the agency was forced to make some estimates on how many guns were manufactured here in the United States, how many were imported from abroad, how many were exported, how many have been destroyed or otherwise lost over the years, and then they came up with a number: 405 million firearms are owned by 323 million Americans. Decried Eastwood, that’s “more guns than Americans!”

The question is impertinent for one simple reason: Why would the *Journal*, or anyone else for that matter, be interested, unless they had intentions to broach or abrogate the Constitution’s Second Amendment. After all, with a national database including the name and address of every American owning a firearm — all in the name of “public safety” of course — the temptation over time would be overwhelming to come and collect them, in the name of “public safety.”

That’s not how it works, according to former New Jersey Superior Court Judge Andrew Napolitano:

The right of the people to keep and bear arms is an extension of the natural right to self-defense and a hallmark of personal sovereignty. It is specifically insulated from governmental interference by the Constitution and has historically been the linchpin of resistance to tyranny....

The historical reality of the Second Amendment’s protection of the right to keep and bear arms is not that it protects the right to shoot deer. It protects the right to shoot tyrants, and it protects the right to shoot at them effectively, with the same instruments they would use upon us. If the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto had had the firepower and ammunition that the Nazis had, some of Poland might have stayed free and more persons would have survived the Holocaust.

The chilling history of the 13,000 Polish Jews who resisted Nazi military forces from April 19, 1943 until they were wiped out by May 19 is told by Marek Edelman, one of the only survivors, in his *The Ghetto Fights*. Edelman says the same thing Napolitano says, i.e., the fact that the Polish Jews were able to hold out for more than a month before being exterminated by the Nazis was due to the firearms they were able to obtain from various outside sources, including from the bodies of German soldiers they had shot while resisting the inevitable.

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It’s helpful to remember that efforts to disarm Americans who legally own firearms have been going on



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for decades, and those seeking disarmament have made no bones about their intentions. Early on it was Pete Shields, who joined with Mark Borinsky to form the National Council to Control Handguns in 1974. Shields served as chairman and clearly expressed the intent of the organization: “total control of handguns in the United States.” If that wasn’t clear enough, Shields added:

The first problem is to slow down the increasing number of handguns being produced and sold in this country. The second is to get handguns registered. And the final problem is to make the possession of all handguns and all handgun ammunition — except for the military, policemen, licensed security guards, licensed sporting clubs, and licensed gun collectors — totally illegal.

From 1980 through 2000, Shields’ organization operated under the name Handgun Control, Inc. In 2001 it was renamed the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence.

Barely 20 years after Shields’ revelation and admission, Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) confirmed the movement to disarm all Americans. During debate over the 1994 “Clinton assault weapons ban” Feinstein said, “If I could’ve gotten 51 votes in the Senate of the United States for an outright ban, picking up every one of them — Mr. and Mrs. America, turn ‘em all in — I would have done it. I could not do that. The votes weren’t here.”

But her intentions were, and remain, the same.

Resistance to the movement is occurring in places such as the state of New York. Some 370,000 legal handgun owners learned in January that they had become criminals upon passage of the state’s demand that they register their firearms with the state police. This created a backlash, wrote Lauren Rosenthal for NPR: “Anyone who took out a hand gun license in New York before 2015 — the year the state passed a landmark gun control law — had to contact state police by January 31 or risk criminal charges. That’s caused a real backlash, particularly among rural gun owners, who don’t entirely trust their state’s intentions.”

It’s estimated that one in five firearms owners missed the deadline, despite the governor’s insistence that it’s for their own good. Said New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, “We’ll have for the first time a statewide handgun database that will allow the state ... allow local officials ... to check periodically.”

After all, he added, some of the data the state already has may not be complete, or is outdated.

That’s how precious rights guaranteed under the Constitution are lost. The battle rages in another form: red flag laws, otherwise called “extreme risk protection orders” (ERPOs). *The New American* summarized how those laws work in Washington State:

[An ERPO] may be filed against any “person who poses a significant danger of causing personal injury to self or others in the near future by having firearms.” The petition can be filed “by a law enforcement agency, a law enforcement officer, or a person who is a family or household member of the respondent [the precriminal].” Family members include “dating partners,” “persons who reside or have resided with the respondent within the last year,” and “stepparents or stepchildren and grandparents and grandchildren.” No crime has been committed. Just suspicion by these honorable folks that said “respondent” might commit one in the future.

The judge makes his ruling without the “respondent” being present, although he will be invited into the judge’s courtroom after the warrant has been issued. At that time the “respondent [will] immediately surrender all firearms and concealed carry license to the [police] officer.” If he resists, he has 48 hours to comply. Otherwise said “officer” will make a visit to the “respondent’s”



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residence to confiscate them, by force if necessary.

It remains a puzzle as to exactly why the *Journal's* Eastwood would author a piece such as this, especially when the only answer is to prepare the way for a national database of gun owners to make things easier for the governments (state and federal) to know where those 405 million firearms are and who owns them.

*Image: artas via iStock / Getty Images Plus*

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