



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on August 30, 2013

Obama Issues Two More Anti-gun Executive Orders

At the swearing-in ceremony at the White House on Thursday of Todd Jones as the director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (still known as ATF), President Obama's point man on gun control, Vice President Joe Biden, [announced](#) that the ATF was issuing new rules concerning the re-importation of U.S. military surplus weapons. Where such importation was previously allowed only with government approval, now all requests for such importation will be denied altogether (except for museums and the government itself).



Biden announced another executive order that eliminates registration of firearms to trusts or to corporations unless an individual associated with those entities undergoes a background check. This has been, according to Biden, "an artful dodge to get around people who are not capable, constitutionally or legally, of owning a weapon."

Todd Jones is the beneficiary of a complete cave-in by the GOP in the Senate, which had been stalling confirmation proceedings by threat of a filibuster for a number of Obama's more extreme nominees. [As noted at Light from the Right](#), "The GOP bought into [Senate Majority Leader Harry] Reid's promises that he would keep the filibuster rule in place as long as the GOP didn't use it. It was a spectacular parliamentary maneuver, removing the rule without repealing it." The agreement was made after Senator John McCain and a handful of other veteran Republicans who wanted an end to the confrontation negotiated with Senate Democratic leaders separately from their own party's leadership.

The impact of the two new executive orders is expected to be slight. Since 2005, requests to re-import just 250,000 military surplus weapons were made from a population that owns an estimated 200 million firearms. And last year the ATF received only 39,000 requests to register guns to corporations and trusts. To put that into perspective, since the start of the Obama administration in 2009, background checks have averaged [44,000 a month](#).

But an infringement is an infringement, no matter how small. Said spokesman Andrew Arulanandam for the National Rifle Association, "The Obama administration has once again missed the mark when it comes to stopping violent crime. This administration should get serious about prosecuting violent criminals who misuse guns and stop focusing its efforts on law-abiding gun owners."

The actions by the Obama administration also fly in the face of [a 2007 study published by Harvard University](#) that concludes that countries with more gun control have higher rates of violent crime, not lower. As explained by the authors of that study, Don Kates and Gary Mauser,

International evidence and comparisons have long been offered as proof of the mantra that more guns mean more deaths and that fewer guns, therefore, mean fewer deaths.

Unfortunately, such discussions are all too often been afflicted by misconceptions and factual error



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and focus on comparisons that are unrepresentative.

It may be useful to begin with a few examples. There is a compound assertion that (a) guns are uniquely available in the United States compared with other modern developed nations, which is why (b) the United States has by far the highest murder rate.

Though these assertions have been endlessly repeated, statement (b) is, in fact, false and statement (a) is substantially so.

The study goes back to the 1960s and 1970s when the Soviet Union had virtually eliminated private ownership of firearms. Reported the authors:

The Soviet Union possessed extremely stringent gun controls that were effectuated by a police state apparatus providing stringent enforcement. So successful was that regime that few Russian civilians now have firearms and very few murders involve them.

Yet, manifest success in keeping its people disarmed did not prevent the Soviet Union from having far and away the highest murder rate in the developed world. In the 1960s and early 1970s, the gun-less Soviet Union's murder rates paralleled or generally exceeded those of gun-ridden America.

While American rates stabilized and then steeply declined, however, Russian murder increased so drastically that by the early 1990s the Russian rate was three times higher than that of the United States.

Between 1998-2004 (the latest figure available for Russia), Russian murder rates were nearly four times higher than American rates....

Luxembourg, where handguns are totally banned and ownership of any kind of gun is minimal, had a murder rate nine times higher than Germany in 2002.

After reviewing all of its data, the authors concluded:

The burden of proof rests on the proponents of the more guns equal more death and fewer guns equal less death mantra, especially since they argue public policy ought to be based on that mantra.

To bear that burden would at the very least require showing that a large number of nations with more guns have more death and that nations that have imposed stringent gun controls have achieved substantial reductions in criminal violence (or suicide).

But those correlations are not observed when a large number of nations are compared across the world.

The actions announced by the White House on Thursday provide more evidence that its anti-gun "mantra" is based upon ideology rather than facts. Included in that announcement was the clear intention to continue to ignore reality and to press forward with its agenda:

Even as Congress fails to act on common-sense proposals ... the president and vice-president remain committed to using all the tools in their power to make progress toward reducing gun violence.

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