



By DAVE KOPEL

Violence around the world is causing a change in firearm policies in many countries, and also a pro-gun shift in attitude here in the United States.

SYDNEY >>> JERUSALEM >>> ONTARIO >>> NEW YORK >>> LONDON >>> MOORE >>> PARIS >>> BOSTON >>> NAIROBI >>>

WAKING TO A DANGEROUS WORLD

Evildoers who worship terrorism are perpetrating lone-wolf attacks around the globe. Sydney, Jerusalem, Ontario, New York City and Paris (see sidebar on Page 41) are places where high-profile attacks have occurred. Again and again, we see that good guys with guns stop bad guys with guns (or knives). The life-or-death question is how long it takes for the good guy with a gun to arrive.

In the United States and other nations, more and more people are recognizing that victims have the best chance

of survival when they can be the first responders. Fewer people now believe the line from former NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg's spokesperson Shannon Watts that successful armed self-defense "never happens."

Let's take a look at an event that Watts says "never happens"—when a good guy with a gun stopped a rampage.

Attack In The Heartland

Thirty-year-old Alton Nolen called himself "Jah'Keem Yisrael." His Facebook site included pictures of Osama bin Laden, the 9/11 attacks and a beheading. He had been sent to prison in 2011 for assaulting a police officer, and was released in March 2013.

On Sept. 25, 2014, Nolen was suspended from his job at Vaughan Foods in Moore, Okla., because of a confrontation with a female employee. Later that day, he returned to the facility armed with an 8-inch knife that he had used for chopping fruits and vegetables. Near the main entrance of the plant, he decapitated 54-year-old grandmother Colleen Hufford. He then entered the building and stabbed and tried to decapitate 43-year-old Traci Johnson.

That was when a good guy with a gun showed up. Mark Vaughan is the company's chief operating officer, and also a reserve deputy with the Oklahoma County Sheriff's Office. He had an AR-15 rifle in his vehicle, which runs contrary to the advice of the Bradys.

After retrieving the rifle, Vaughan fired three times, stopping the attack. Nolen survived and is awaiting trial for murder and attempted murder. The time from the beginning of the 911 call, made by an office employee right after the attack began, to the first defensive gunshot was a little over three minutes.

Oklahoma's laws foster a culture of safety. Businesses can allow defensive arms in a workplace. Employees have the right to keep their guns in cars in a corporate parking lot. Responsible adults with safety training and a background check can obtain a permit to carry a handgun for lawful protection. The safety culture saved lives in Moore.

Australia's Shame

In contrast, during the past two decades Australia has passed tighter gun laws that have actually created a safe zone for armed predators. And some are taking advantage of it.

On Dec. 15, 2014, Man Haron Monis (birth name Mohammad Hassan Manteghi) walked into the Lindt Chocolate Cafe, located in Martin Place, in the heart of Sydney's financial and legal district. He took the 17 people inside hostage.

Monis was armed with a shotgun that isn't supposed to exist in Australia anymore. All semi-automatic long guns were banned in 1996, and registration lists were used to enforce the mass confiscation of about one-sixth of Australian firearms.

Monis had entered Australia from Iran in 1996 seeking political asylum, which was granted in 2001. He proclaimed himself a "sheikh" and got a lot of media attention, although apparently few followers. So he lived on welfare, and wrote venomous letters to the parents of Australian soldiers who had died fighting in Afghanistan. He was convicted of "using a postal or similar service to menace, harass or cause offence." Australia's High Court upheld the conviction three days before Monis' attack in the cafe.

At the time of the attack, Monis was also facing pending charges as an accessory-before-the-fact in the murder of his ex-wife, and dozens of counts for sexual assault.

Once Monis took over the Lindt Cafe, he made the hostages unfurl an ISIS-style banner in the window. Police officers responded as quickly as possible, but Monis had already taken control of the situation inside the cafe, leading to a siege that lasted more than 16 hours. Five hostages escaped, and Monis announced that if anyone else fled, one of the remaining hostages would be shot.

At 2:03 a.m., Monis began to fall asleep. The dozen remaining hostages rushed for the door, and six escaped before Monis regained alertness

and began firing. Cafe manager Tori Johnson tried to wrest his gun away, but Monis killed him. At 2:10 a.m., law enforcement burst in, and a firefight ensued. Attorney Katrina Dawson, a mother of three, was killed while attempting to protect a pregnant friend. Law enforcement officers ended Monis' life.

In the days after the siege, Australian Sen. David Leyonhjelm, of the Liberal Democratic Party, pointed out that Australia's complete repression of armed self-defense actually had made Monis' hostage-taking possible.

Australia's extremely restrictive gun laws allow a limited selection of firearms for sports, but forbid defensive gun ownership. As Leyonhjelm pointed out, all of the hostages were prohibited by law "to have a knife, a stick, a pepper spray, a personal Taser, mace, anything like that for self-defense." As Australia and Great Britain illustrate, the gun-ban lobbies don't just hate firearms—they hate the very idea of self-defense.

"What happened in that cafe would have been most unlikely to have occurred in Florida, Texas, or Vermont, or Alaska in America, or perhaps even Switzerland as well," Leyonhjelm noted. "That nutcase who held them all hostage wouldn't have known that they were armed, and bad guys don't like to be shot back at."

Indeed, in the United States, almost all the locations where mass homicides take place are pretend "gun-free zones." In these artificially dangerous places, law-abiding citizens are forbidden to carry, so would-be mass murderers know that they can kill with impunity—until the good guys with guns arrive.

Israel Under Fire

Unlike Australia, where Prime Minister Tony Abbott reacted to the Sydney siege by announcing that the government should impose even more gun control, the Israeli government moved toward more gun freedom after a deadly attack.

At 7 a.m. on Nov. 18, 2014, about two dozen people were praying at the Kehilat B'Nai Torah Yeshiva Synagogue in the Har Nof neighborhood of Jerusalem, Israel. Cousins Uday and

Ghassan Abu Jamal attacked with a handgun and axes, murdering four rabbis, three of whom were American, one British. Seven more people were wounded, two critically.

Police arrived 11 minutes after the attack began and killed the two attackers. Two police officers were wounded in the shootout, and one of them, Zidan Saif, later died.

After the attack, Public Security Minister Yitzhak Aharonovich promised, "In the coming hours, I will ease restrictions on carrying weapons." He followed through, making gun carry permits more readily available to Israeli citizens.

"The decision to ease the restriction stems from recent events and the need to strengthen the sense of security among the general population and due to the recent terrorist attacks that have struck us," he explained.

In high-risk areas, carry permits will be issued to reserve officers of the Israel Defense Forces, as well as to lower-ranking former soldiers who served in some specialized combat units. Firearms instructors will be issued carry permits. Additionally, security guards will not be required to turn in their guns at the completion of their daily work.

These reforms were long overdue. Back in 1974, Israel had instituted a volunteer armed guard program for schools, after a Palestine Liberation Organization terrorist attack murdered 22 children and three adults in the northern town of Ma'alot. By 1995, every Israeli school had an armed guard.

But gun ownership licenses and carry permits for ordinary citizens have become much more difficult to obtain since 1992. That year, a psychiatric patient who was also working as an armed security guard killed four social workers at the clinic where he was being treated.

After the December attack, though, the city's former police chief, Aryeh Amit, said, "Every citizen who has a gun should carry it." He noted the "enormous amount of illegal handguns" held by criminals. So "citizens should be able to get a weapon. Those who have one must carry it everywhere."



REUTERS/YOUSSEF BOUDJAL

PARIS HORROR

Just before press time for this issue, terrorists armed with fully automatic rifles attacked the offices of *Charlie Hebdo* magazine in Paris, France. Twelve journalists were murdered in the span of a

few minutes, with more critically wounded.

Unlike the crimes described in the accompanying article, the *Charlie Hebdo* atrocity was not the work of untrained extremists. At least one of the murderers had been trained in the Middle East, and had previously served prison time in France for attempting to join Iraqi terrorist forces fighting the United States.

The murderers were apparently angered

by cartoons that had lampooned Mohammed and Islamic terrorists, as the magazine has mocked many other religions and ideologies. While fleeing the scene, the terrorists murdered French police officer Ahmed Merabet, demonstrating the danger that terrorists pose to good and decent Muslims. Two suspects were later killed by police.

Charlie Hebdo had been firebombed in 2011, and the French government had assigned a police officer to guard one of the editors. Against a pair of trained killers with automatic rifles, that was insufficient.

French law does not allow the possession of defensive arms, even by people at grave risk of murder, such as the *Charlie Hebdo* staff. If the assassins had been met with counterfire from several directions, perhaps some lives could have been saved.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 1,106 journalists have been murdered since 1992. The American Founders saw the Second Amendment as an essential tool to safeguard the exercise of First Amendment rights. Wherever journalists put themselves at risk by speaking out, they should have the option, and the means, to defend themselves.

French police forcibly stop young people on a scooter near the hostage taking at a kosher supermarket in eastern Paris.

Rights For Russia?

Of course, the chances of being attacked by an apolitical criminal are much greater than the risk of being attacked by somebody acting out an extremist ideology. That's why even in Russia firearm laws are being reformed.

Russia has a serious crime problem. The homicide rate is nearly three times the U.S. level, and most homicides go unsolved. Only 46 percent of Russians feel safe walking alone at night.

So Russia now has a gun rights organization, "Right to Bear Arms" (<http://ongun.ru/>). It is led by Maria Butina, a young woman who grew up in the mountains of Altai, Siberia, and who now lives in Moscow. For several years her group has been pressuring Vladimir Putin's regime to allow defensive carry of arms.

While it was already legal to carry "cold" weapons (e.g., self-defense sprays), the group argued for the right to carry firearms.

The Putin regime has long resisted the calls for reforming the laws. But in late 2014, the regime acceded, and one of the longest-standing handgun bans in the world was repealed. Carry permits will be available for handguns and for long guns, so that Russians can "protect

their lives, health and property."

The fact that even a dictatorship with a façade of democracy is moving toward respecting the human right of armed self-defense is one indication of the direction global public opinion and related policy is moving.

Attitude Shift At Home

Here in the United States, we have detailed data about public opinion trends. According to a Gallup poll, in 1959 three out of five Americans supported handgun prohibition. Today, only one in four do.

Since 1993, the Pew Research Center has been asking people whether it is more important to protect the right to own guns, or to control guns. From 1993 to 2007, the pro-control side held a comfortable lead—sometimes by a margin as high as 37 percent. Since 2008, however, the two sides were more or less tied, and now the pro-gun rights side holds its largest lead ever at 52 percent.

What is much more important than what people think about gun politics, however, is what they think about gun ownership. In 2000, Gallup introduced the question, "Do you think having a gun in the house makes it a safer place to be, or more dangerous place to be?" In 2000, 35 percent said "safer" and

51 percent said "more dangerous." Since then, public opinion has shifted decisively to the pro-gun view. In 2014, 63 percent of Americans answered "safer," and only 30 percent "more dangerous."

This doesn't mean our battle to protect our rights is over—far from it. Anti-gunners will always push for restricted firearm ownership as long as big-dollar donors like Bloomberg will foot the bill. It does mean, however, that the long-term cultural trends are positive, since people at home and abroad are increasingly recognizing that guns in the right hands make everyone safer.

The life-or-death nature of the right to keep and bear arms is much too important to be decided by those who foolishly think that disarming law-abiding Americans will make anybody safer. The world's oldest civil rights organization understands that lives depend on whether the arrival of the first good guy with a gun takes 11 minutes, five minutes, or whether the good guy is already on the scene, exercising his or her right to carry.

When you participate in the civil rights work of the NRA, you are helping to create awareness and save lives. ☐