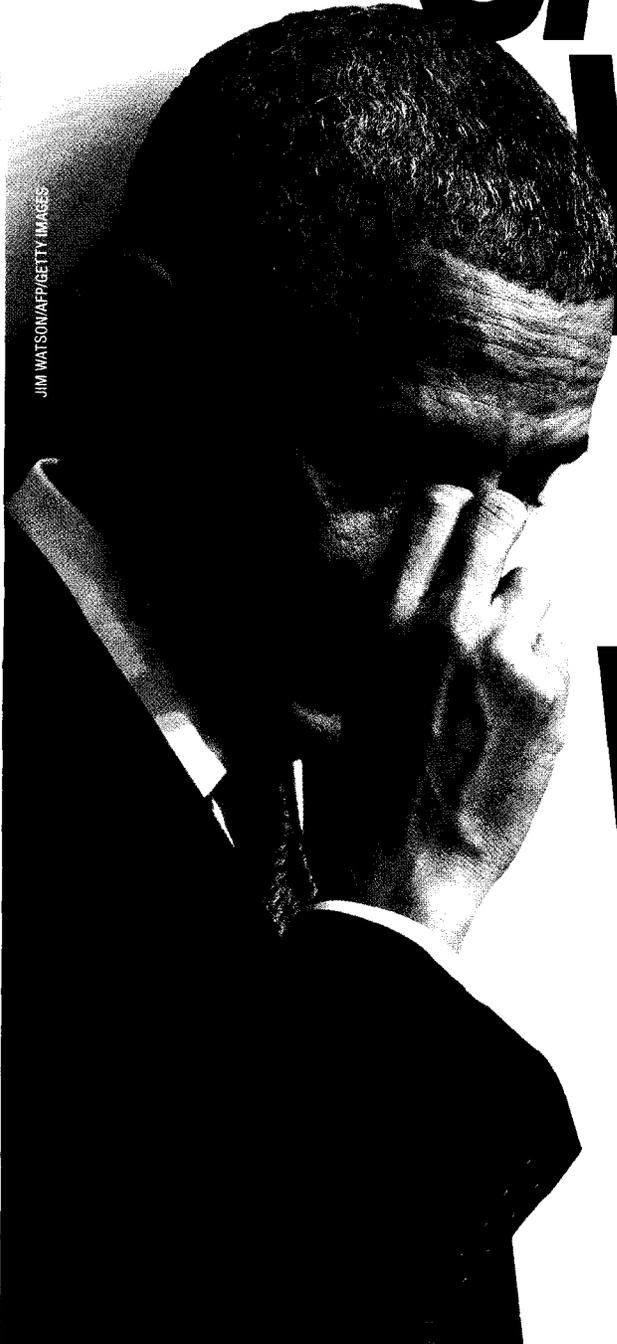


A report designed
to set an agenda for
gun control research
exposes the lies
behind anti-gun
crusades.

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by **BLAINE SMITH**, *Associate Editor*

THE RESULTS

his past January, just weeks after the horrific murders at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Conn., President Barack Obama proudly proclaimed 23 executive actions meant to go hand in hand with the recent offensive in Congress targeting the Second Amendment rights of Americans.

Though the mass murder in Newtown provided fast cover for a renewed debate on firearm policy, the prohibitions on gun rights that the Obama administration and its friends in Congress sought to establish have had little to do with ensuring there's no repeat of the tragedy at Sandy Hook, and have focused squarely on disarming law-abiding Americans.

Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., sponsor of "universal background check" legislation that failed to garner the needed votes in Congress this past April, openly admitted to the press that his legislation would do nothing to stop a future Newtown massacre. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., who sponsored failed legislation aimed at obtaining that perennial favorite of the anti-gun faction—a national "assault weapons" ban—also acknowledged the inherent inability of her proposal to prevent a similar public rampage.

In so doing, it was implied, if not expressed, by anti-gunners that gun ownership by average Americans is more deadly than armed criminals and mental defectives; thus, restrictions on the law-abiding must take precedence.

Yet a funny thing happened in late June; a report issued by the Institute of Medicine (IOM)—the medical counterpart of the National Academy of Science and National Research Council—at the behest of the Obama administration, in effect acknowledged the truth: guns save lives.

One of the 23 orders the president issued in the early weeks of 2013 directed the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to jump back into its old role as the gun control research arm of the federal government—a role it had played until Congress halted funding of firearm research meant to "advocate or promote gun control." Tasked with reviewing the "causes and prevention of gun violence," the CDC would then have to decide which topics should be the focus of future research efforts and dollars.

The CDC itself turned to the IOM to review past scholarship and make recommendations of future research.

Of course, Obama and his allies seemed uninterested in waiting for the panel's recommendations before launching a spring offensive targeting the Second Amendment. To date, these anti-gun attacks in Congress have been repelled, but by no means beaten back entirely.

In late June, the IOM released a report entitled "Priorities for Research to Reduce the Threat of Firearm-Related Violence." The report surprised those on both sides of the issue, noting many points that run counter to the administration's usual spin on the gun issue.

The summary that leads off the report notes that President Obama's

orders were motivated by the "recent, highly publicized, tragic mass shootings in Newtown, Connecticut; Aurora, Colorado; Oak Creek, Wisconsin; and Tucson, Arizona, [that] have sharpened the public's interest in protecting our children and communities from the effects of firearm violence."

Yet, where one would expect a report compiled at the behest of an anti-gun White House to quickly trot out debunked statistics and lay the blame for criminal violence at the feet of the law-abiding gun owners, it instead offers a sober evaluation of the available scholarship regarding firearm ownership, regardless of the preconceptions held by the study's benefactor.

"The number of public mass shootings of the type that occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary School accounted for a very small fraction of all firearm-related deaths," the report notes, later stating that "Mass shootings are a highly visible and moving tragedy, but represent only a small fraction of total firearm-related violence."

But beyond headline-grabbing mass violence, when it comes to firearm possession by the average American, the IOM was surprisingly evenhanded.

"There are many legal and responsible uses for guns," the report states in regard to individual firearm ownership. "An individual's right to own and possess guns was established in the U.S. Constitution and affirmed in the 2008 and 2010 Supreme Court rulings in *District of Columbia v. Heller* and *McDonald v. City of Chicago*."

When it comes to misuse of guns, the report notes that, "Overall crime rates have

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declined in the past decade and violent crimes, including homicides, specifically, have declined in the past five years ...” while overall rates of gun ownership have seen a precipitous rise. (In fact, the rates of homicide and overall violent crime have been dropping steadily for more than 20 years.)

Though some might claim the passage of particular gun regulations caused this drop in crime rates—or insist that passage of universal background check or “assault weapons” ban legislation would further reduce crime rates—the report suggests little correlation between gun control laws and reduction in crime.

“Controlling access to guns through background checks or restrictions on particular types of firearms remains controversial, and the effectiveness of various types of control is inadequately researched,” the report admits. However, **it notes that several studies reviewed “found that gun restrictions had no net impact on major violence and crime.”**

Neither background checks, firearm bans nor any number of other laws would have an effect considering the source of most crime guns. As the report notes, “According to a 1997 survey of inmates, approximately 70 percent of the guns used or possessed by criminals at the time of their arrest came from family or friends, drug dealers, street purchases or the underground market.”

The IOM also looked at the subject of defensive gun uses—a particularly vexing topic to the Obama administration, one would imagine—and found, “Almost all national survey estimates indicate that defensive gun uses by victims are at least as common as offensive uses by criminals, with estimates of annual uses ranging from about 500,000 to more than 3 million per year.”

Though the report does mention survey results that have found as few as 108,000 instances of defensive gun use per year—a figure popular among anti-gun advocates wishing to minimize the positive effects of firearm possession—the CDC gives this figure short shrift,

noting it is “difficult to interpret because respondents were not asked specifically about defensive gun use.”

Regardless, the low estimate of 108,000 instances of defensive gun use **would equal approximately 10 defensive gun uses for each murder with a gun in the U.S.** Given the more realistic range of 500,000 to 3 million defensive gun uses per year, **this jumps to the neighborhood of 50 to 300 defensive gun uses for each instance of gun murder every year in the U.S.,** an estimate that should give Obama and friends pause.

Further, the report notes an additional statistic that supports the value of firearms in defensive situations.

“Studies that directly assessed the effect of actual defensive uses of guns (i.e., incidents in which a gun was ‘used’ by the crime victim in the sense of attacking or threatening an offender) have found consistently lower injury rates among gun-using crime victims compared with victims who used other self-protective strategies,” the study reported.

Surely, a report that addresses these issues so candidly must have been a hard pill for the Obama administration to swallow. Still, we mustn’t convince ourselves that the CDC will ever become a pro-gun organization, or that the attacks on our gun rights will suddenly subside. The report is merely a roadmap for future research. As detailed in this month’s “ILA Report” (p. 56), the report recommends 14 firearm-related “priorities” as well as 50 sub-topics it believes should be the focus of future research—including “smart gun” technology, which by itself could prove ruinous to the Second Amendment if mandated by law. If the CDC ignores calls for even-handed research, its funding could spark another decade of dubious “studies” for the gun ban groups and media to wield against gun owners.

Therefore, by no means do the favorable points noted in this report mean our fight to preserve the Second Amendment is over. But we can hope that its glimpses of truth will enlighten some to look honestly at the issue and join the fight to protect our Second Amendment rights. **Ⓜ**

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