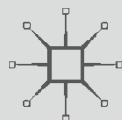


CONFRONTING
GUN VIOLENCE
IN AMERICA

THOMAS GABOR



murders, such as the Orlando nightclub shooting (49 dead, 53 wounded), the Virginia Tech campus shooting (33 dead, 17 wounded), the Aurora, Colorado, theater shooting (12 dead, 58 wounded), the massacre of children and school staff at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut (26 dead and 2 wounded), and the San Bernardino, California, politically motivated attack (14 dead and 22 injured).

In the 1980s and early 1990s, it was observed that assault weapons and other semiautomatic firearms were involved in some high-profile mass shootings.⁴⁹ A study of 133 mass shootings (4 people or more killed, not including the shooter) from January 2009 to July 2015, including family shootings, revealed that 11 % involved assault weapons and/or high-capacity magazines. In these incidents, 155 % more people were shot and 47 % more people were killed than in other mass shootings.⁵⁰ Thus, the presence of these weapons and magazines facilitates mass casualty shootings.

Daniel Webster of Johns Hopkins University said the following in front of the US Senate's Committee on the Judiciary⁵¹:

Assault weapons have features that facilitate criminal use and an assailant's ability to rapidly fire a large number of rounds of ammunition and thereby increase both the likelihood of injury and death as well as the number of injuries and deaths in an attack. Such features include the ability to accept large capacity magazines, pistol grips and folding stocks on rifles (to make the weapon more concealable), and threaded barrels for attaching silencers. These features are unnecessary for legitimate sporting uses or self-defense.

There are mixed findings as to whether the assault weapons ban of 1994 had an effect on violent crime or at least the weapons used to commit crimes. One positive sign was that, following the ban, assault weapons made up a small percentage of firearms that were recovered by police in relation to crimes. In six major cities—Baltimore, Boston, Miami, St. Louis, Anchorage, and Milwaukee—the share of gun crimes committed with assault weapons during the post-ban period declined by between 17 % and 72 %.⁵² Nationally, gun traces conducted by the ATF were far less likely to involve assault weapons following the ban.