

# A Polite Society is a Less Armed Society

**How several democracies changed  
after scrapping many of their guns**

'Human Target' International Congress on Social  
and Health Effects of the Global Arms Trade

International Physicians for the Prevention of  
Nuclear War, Physicians for Social Responsibility

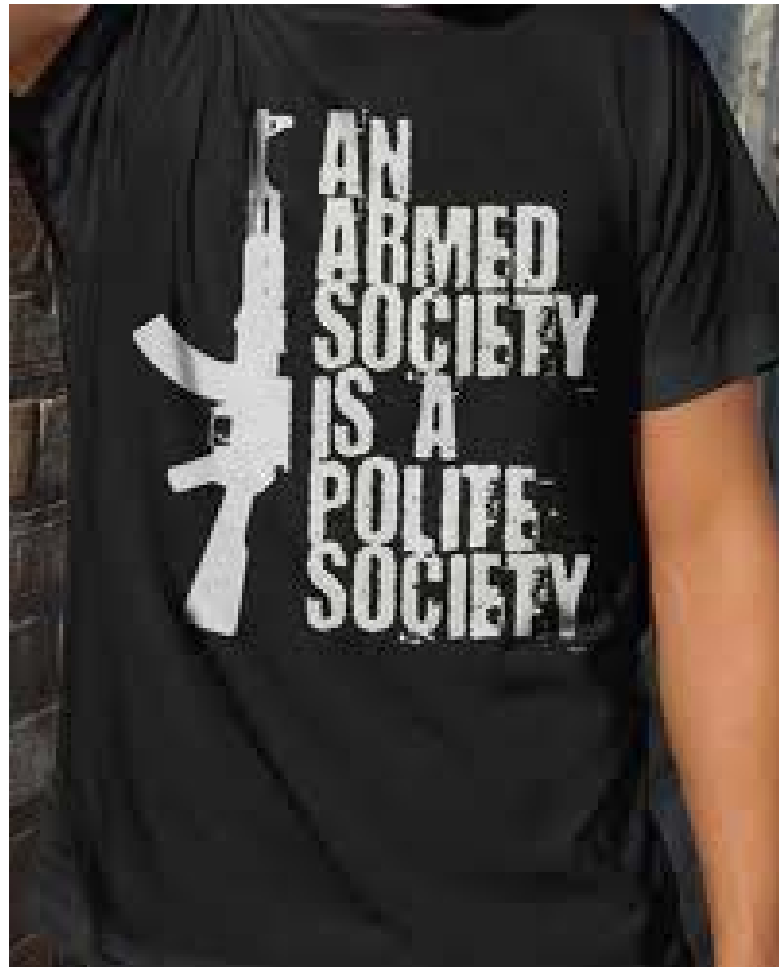
Villingen-Schwenningen, Germany

30 May – 2 June 2013

**Philip Alpers**

[philip.alpers@sydney.edu.au](mailto:philip.alpers@sydney.edu.au)





Robert A. Heinlein  
1942



## Mass Shootings, Australia and New Zealand, 1987-1996

- 14 mass shootings in 10 years
  - 127 dead, 55 injured
  - 64% of victims shot with a semi-automatic rifle
  - 67% of the killers were licensed gun owners
  - 87% had no previous history of violent crime
  - 67% had no previous history of mental illness
-



Farmers' Rally  
Sale, Victoria  
15 June 1996

## Firearms Collected and Destroyed, 1988-2012

- 38 state and federal amnesties run over 3,062 weeks
  - Federal long gun and handgun buybacks 728,667
  - Additional guns given up for destruction 219,721
  - Total private guns collected & destroyed 948,388
-

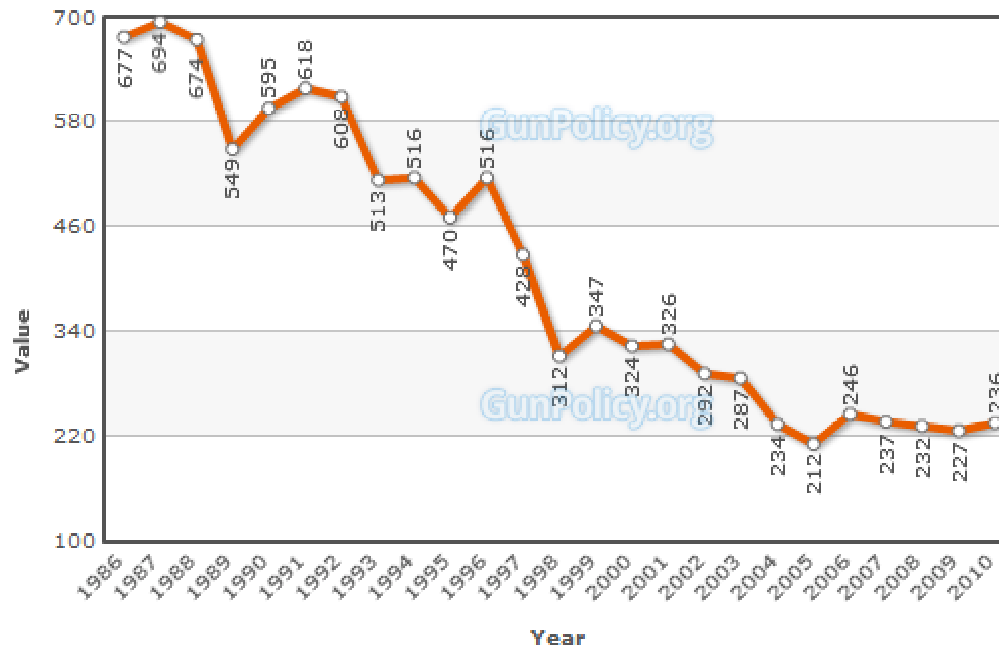


## GunPolicy.org Facts



### Australia

#### Total Gun Deaths



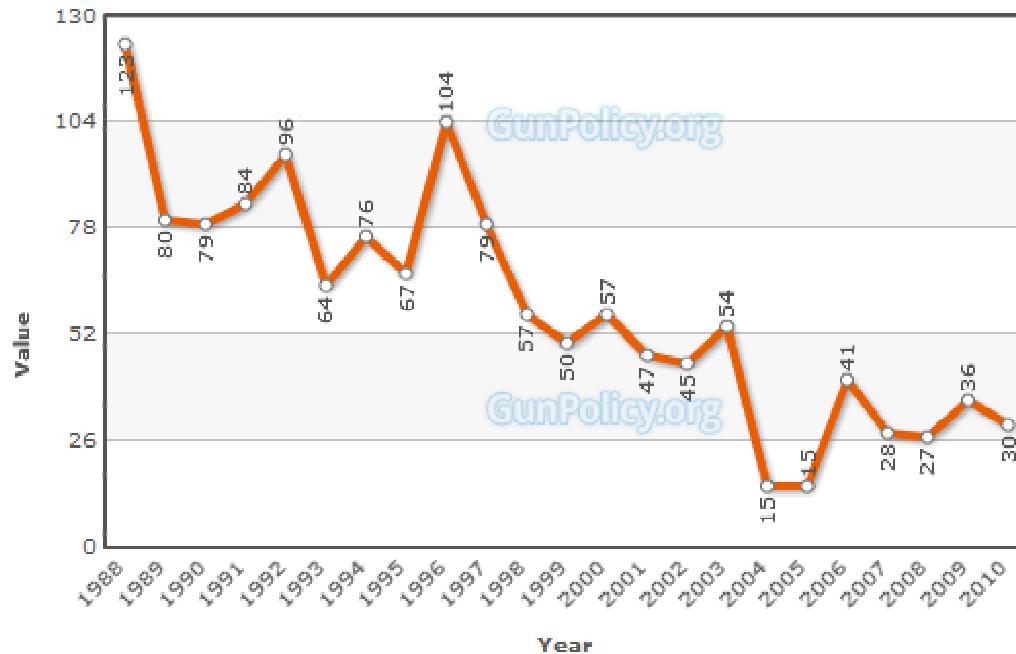


## GunPolicy.org Facts



### Australia

#### Gun Homicides



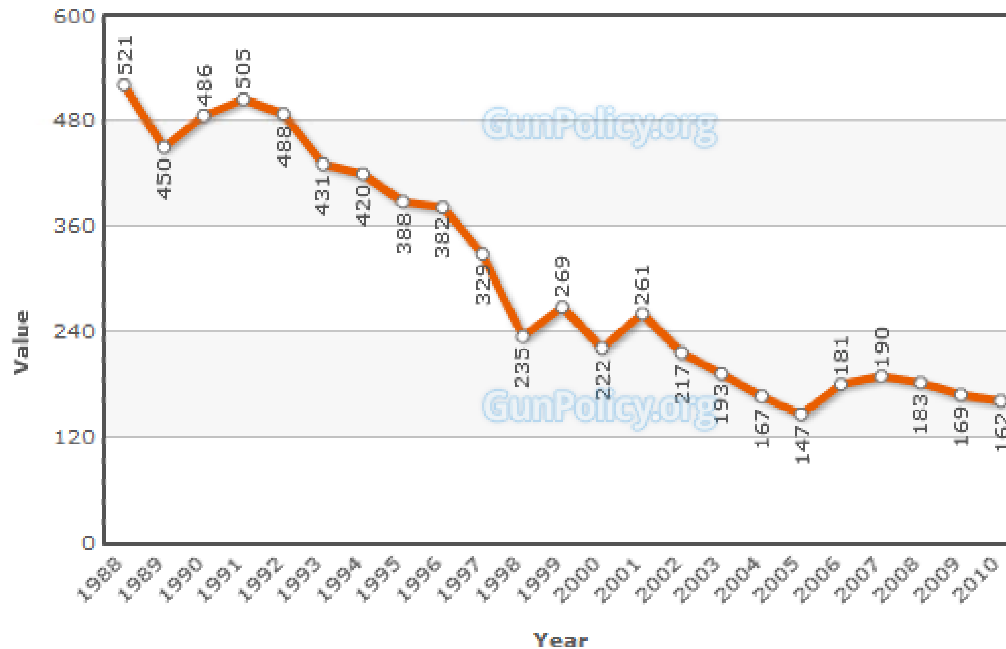


## GunPolicy.org Facts



### Australia

#### Gun Suicides





“The buyback led to a drop in the firearm suicide rates of almost 80%, with no significant effect on non-firearm death rates. The effect on firearm homicides is of similar magnitude but is less precise.”

-- Leigh and Neill, 2010

---



“The largest falls in firearm deaths occurred in states where more firearms were bought back.”

-- Leigh and Neill, 2010

---



- Australia halved its number of gun-owning households
- Australia saved itself 200 gun deaths and US\$500 million in costs each year

-- Leigh and Neill, 2010

---



“The rates per 100,000 of total firearm deaths, firearm homicides and firearm suicides all at least doubled their existing rates of decline after the revised gun laws”

-- Chapman, Alpers, Agho and Jones, 2006

---

“The gun buy-back and restrictive legislative changes had no influence on firearm homicide in Australia.”

-- Baker and McPhedran, 2007

---

## Targets

- Reduce the risk of mass shootings
- Reduce the risk of gun death and injury

## Results

- No mass shootings in Australia since 1996
  - Overall risk of dying by gunshot halved since 1996
  - No evidence of displacement to other methods
-

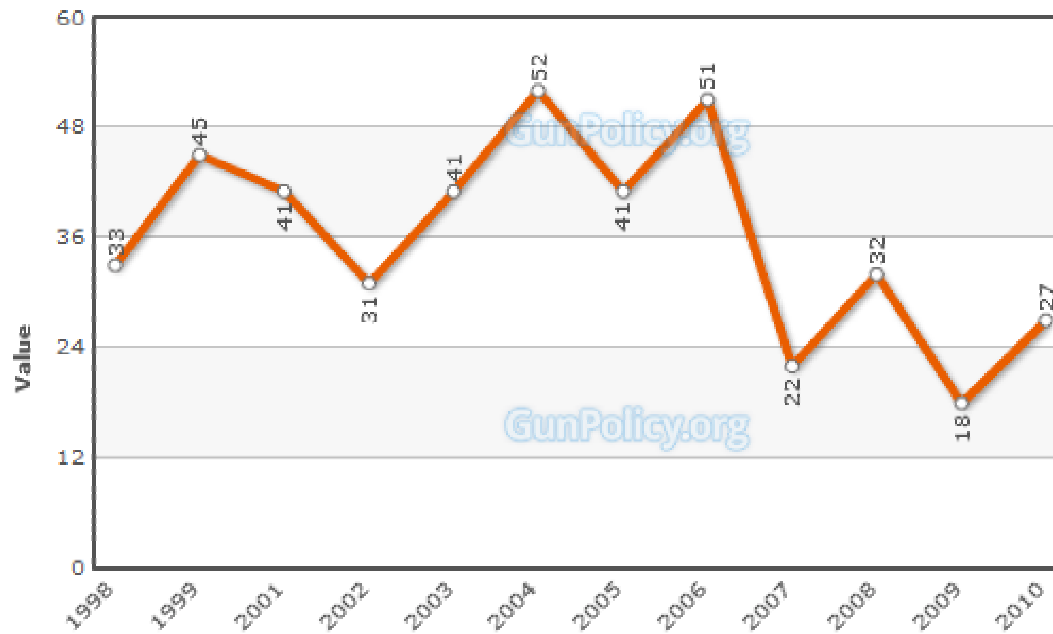


## GunPolicy.org Facts



### United Kingdom

#### Gun Homicides



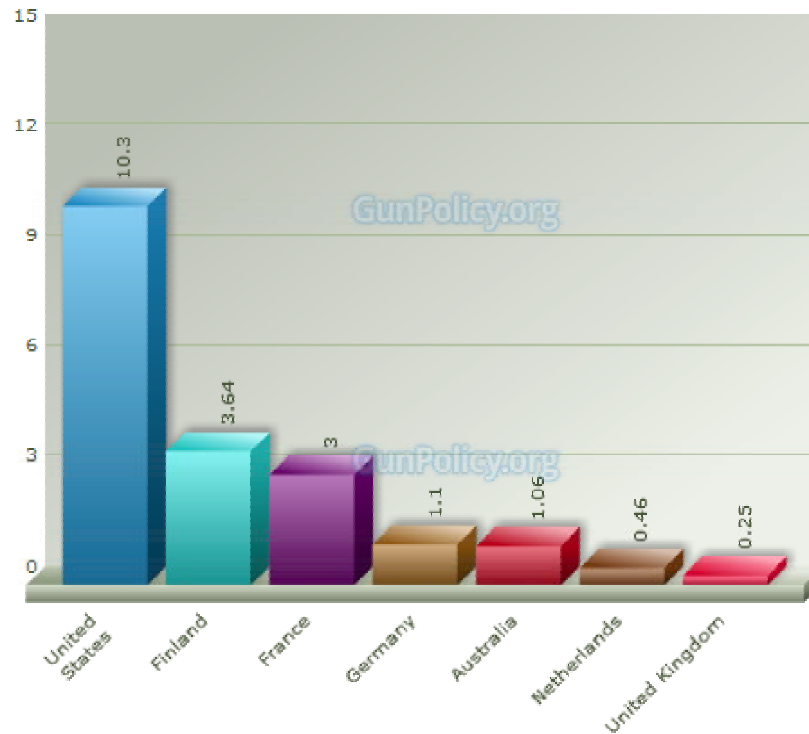


## GunPolicy.org Facts



### Compare the United Kingdom

Rate of All Gun Deaths per 100,000 People





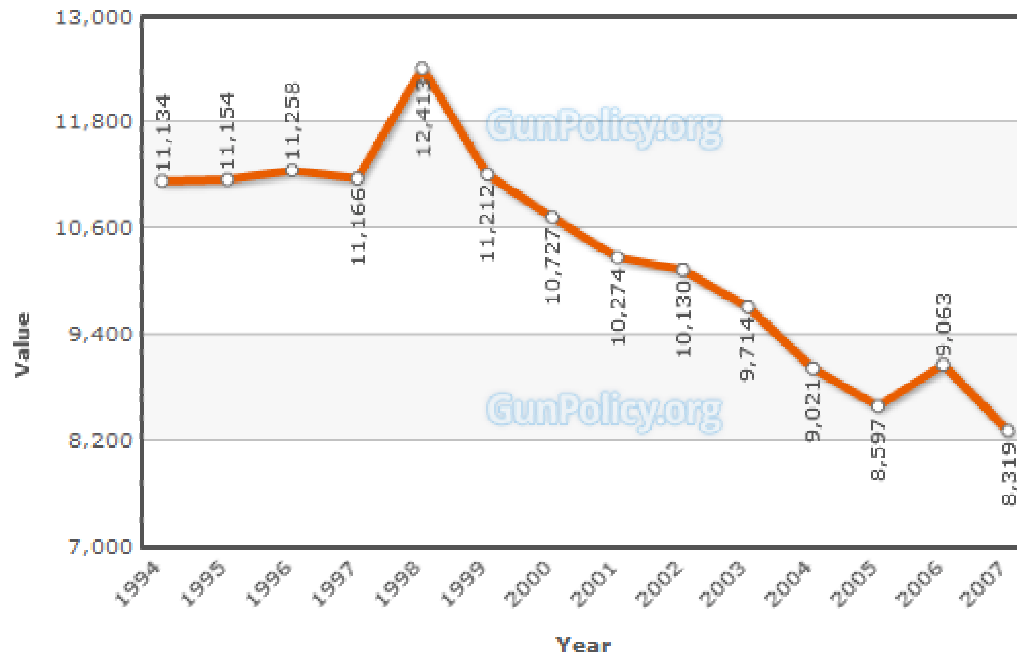


## GunPolicy.org Facts



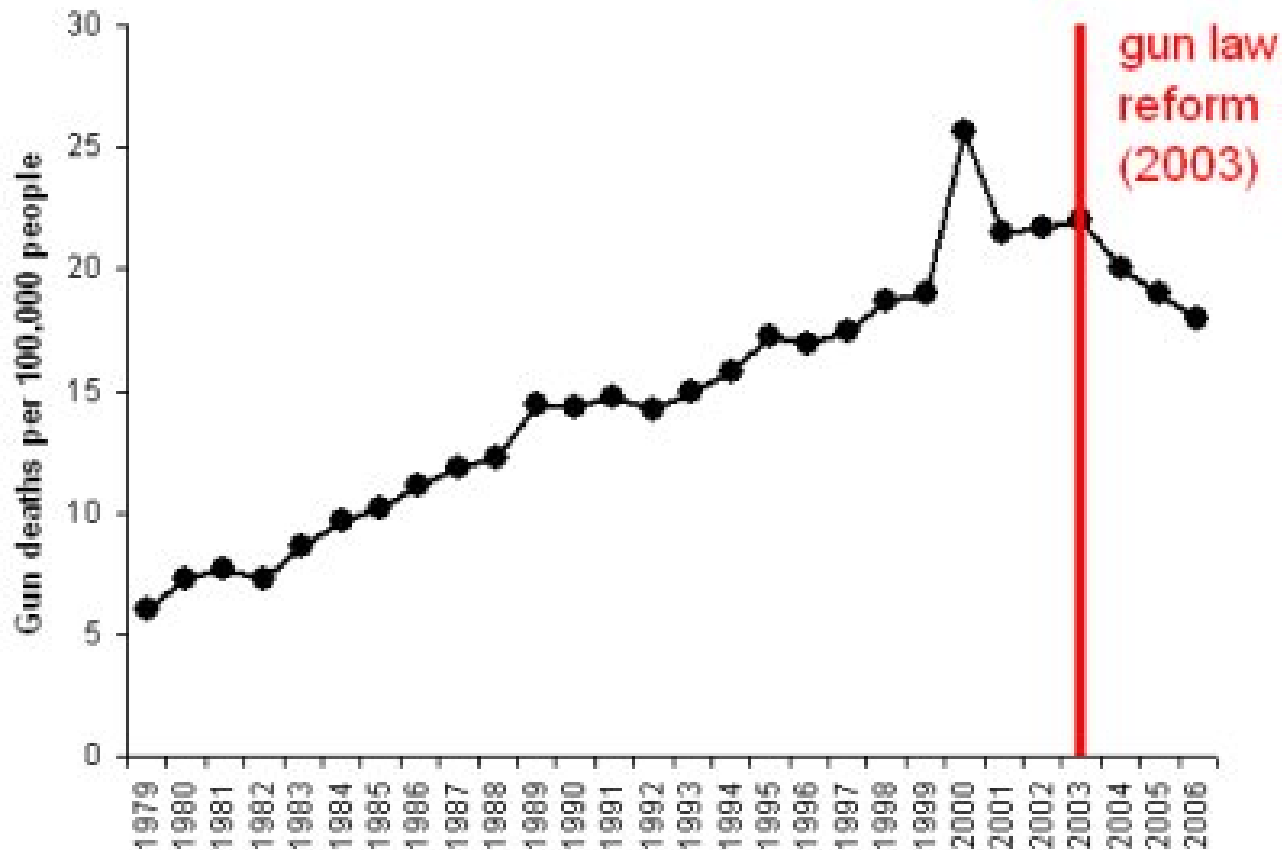
### South Africa

#### Gun Homicides





## Total gun death rate in Brazil



**Brazil**  
460,000 guns  
destroyed  
24,000 lives saved  
-- Health Ministry

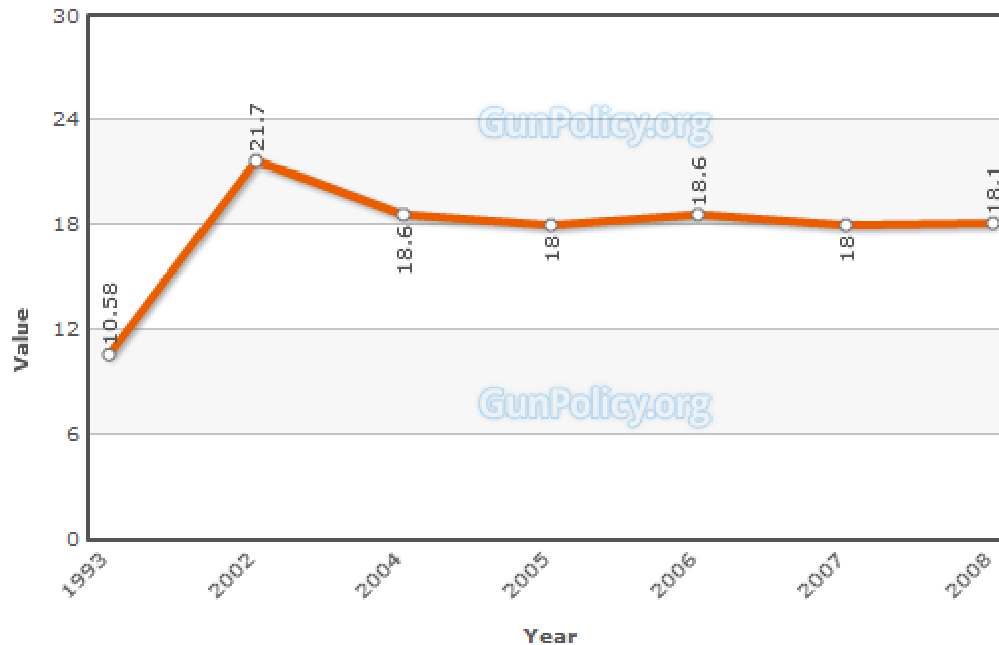


## GunPolicy.org Facts



### Brazil

Rate of Gun Homicide per 100,000 People



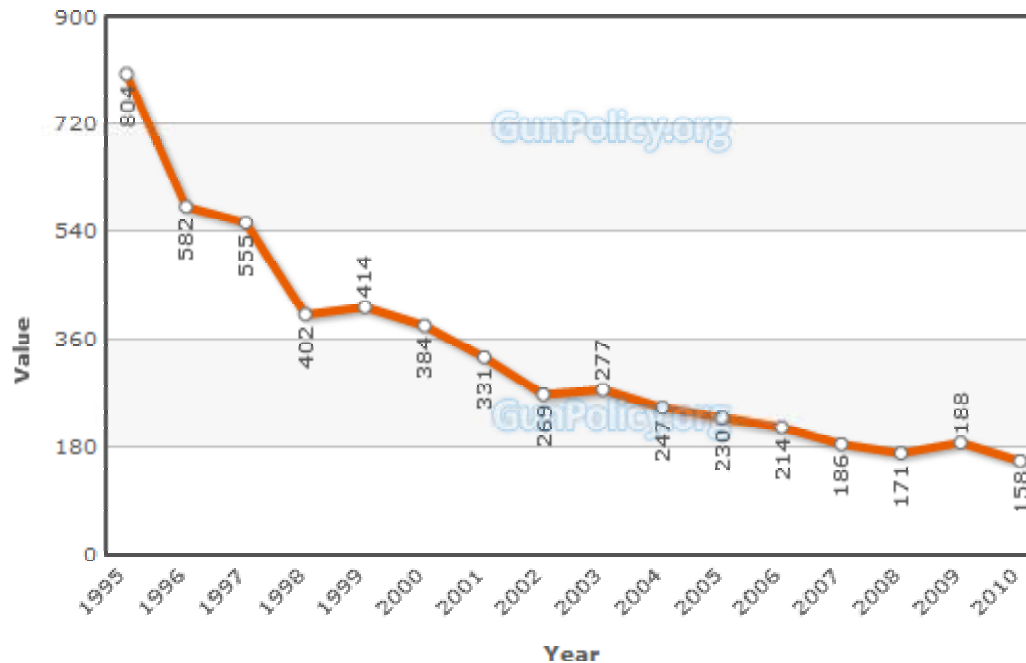


## GunPolicy.org Facts



### Germany

#### Gun Homicides



"Guns are where tobacco was in the 1950s...  
There's a little bit of science and a great deal of  
reluctance to do anything with the results."

Garen Wintemute  
*Denver Post*  
Nov 2012

---



## Firearm Death and Injury: The Creep of Public Health Language

Centers for Disease Control: “A public health emergency”

US Surgeon General: “An epidemic”

AMA, ICRC: “A disease”

UN Secy General, Vatican: “A scourge”

---



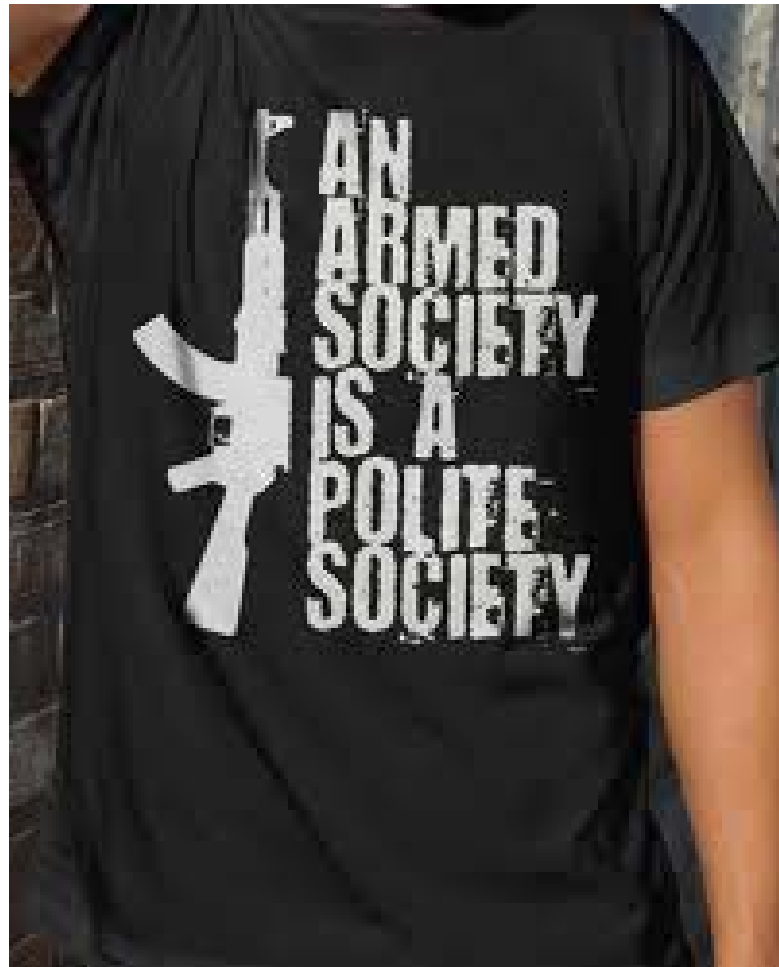


Nebilyer Valley, PNG  
© PNG Post-Courier









Robert A. Heinlein  
1942



August 7, 2007 — Updated 0630 GMT (1430 HKT)

## Report: Pentagon lost almost 200,000 weapons in Iraq

### STORY HIGHLIGHT

- Pentagon: not awa
- U.S. lost track of 1
- Training comman
- Defense Departm

[Next Article in World](#)

READ

WASHINGTON (CNN) — Nea  
unaccounted for in Iraq, acc



Asked if the 110,000 missing AK-47 rifles and 80,000 pistols might have ended up in the hands of insurgents, a Pentagon spokesman said there was no hard data, but "anything is possible."

The report also says a review of the 2007 property books shows continuing problems with missing and incomplete records.



**ABC NEWS ONLINE**

News Home  
Top Stories  
Just In  
World  
Australia/Local  
Business  
Politics  
Weather  
Sport  
Health  
Arts  
Sci-Tech  
Environment  
Rural  
Ind  
Opi  
Off  
For  
Ser  
Hel  
Pro

Last Update: Sunday, May 28, 2006. 12:34pm (AEST) [Print](#) [Email](#)



## Troops will disarm all Timorese: commander

The commander of the Australian troops deployed in East Timor says the soldiers are focused on disarming warring gangs in the capital, Dili.

A total of 1,300 Australian soldiers are on the ground in East Timor, while two more convoys will reach the tiny nation today.

Focused on Dili: Brigadier Slater says all East Timorese will be disarmed.

**“We will be disarming everybody in Dili.**

**“The only people in Dili carrying weapons when we are finished will be [proper security forces].”**

- Brigadier Mick Slater, Commander, Australian Troops

**ABC News**  
Video on Demand

“The only people in Dili carrying weapons when we are finished will be [proper security forces].” Brigadier Slater says it is not difficult for the troops to persuade militia members to give up their weapons.

“They want to do this, they want to resolve the problems that they’ve got,” he said.



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SYDNEY

**GunPolicy.org**

International firearm injury  
prevention and policy

**ARMED  
VIOLENCE  
REDUCTION  
MONITOR**

---