

Trump Sends in the Gun Confiscation Cops

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Chicago police are keeping busy confiscating “illegal guns.” Last year through the summer, the confiscations were occurring at a rate of one every 59 minutes according to Chicago Police Department figures related by Mark Berman in an October 2016 Washington Post [article](#). This summer, the Chicago police will have some assistance from the United States government in racking up impressive gun confiscation numbers.

Following through on a plan that began its development during the Obama administration, the Trump administration and Chicago Police Department announced last week the [sending](#) of the Chicago Crime Gun Strike Force, involving an additional 20 Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) agents plus equipment, to Chicago to aid city police, as well as state and US prosecutors, in a crackdown on illegal guns and the people who possess them.

Gun confiscation has been a big project in the city for years. In the May 27, 2014 Chicago Mayor’s Office and Chicago Police Department report “[Tracing the Guns: The Impact of Illegal Guns on Violence in Chicago](#),” a comparison was made between gun confiscation numbers in Chicago and such numbers in Los Angeles and New York City. The report relates that the 7,624 guns the Chicago Police Department confiscated in 2012 amounted to more per capita than the gun confiscations by police in New York City and Los Angeles combined.

You may wonder what an illegal gun is. US law prohibits gun possession by individuals in certain classes of people, such as [people who possess illegal drugs](#). US law also places special

limits on the possession of certain types of guns. The US government, for example, bars people from owning fully automatic firearms, except for some such guns that may be possessed after permission is obtained from and a fee is paid to the US government. Similarly, the US government imposes a minimum barrel length requirement for shotguns. Remember when Randy Weaver and his family were subjected at their home to a US government siege? Back in 1989, an undercover ATF agent [convinced](#) Randy Weaver to sell a couple “sawed-off shotguns” allegedly in violation of US law. Weaver then did not appear in court in regard to the entrapment-derived gun charges on the correct day after a notice with the wrong date had been sent. Further US government actions included the killing of Weaver’s son and wife and the siege of the family’s Idaho home.

“Illegal guns” take on a broader meaning in Chicago. In addition to US government laws, state laws expand the scope or what is included in the category of illegal guns. In Illinois, people are even required to obtain from the state police a [Firearm Owners Identification card](#) (FOID card) to legally possess a gun or ammunition. Further, legislation signed into law in August by Governor Bruce Rauner [makes it a felony](#) for someone without a FOID card to bring a gun into Illinois from any other state in order to sell, deliver, or transfer the gun. The new law is [argued](#) to be necessary to stop people from buying guns in other states where gun laws are less restrictive and then bringing the guns in to Illinois, and to Chicago in particular. And Illinois gun restrictions extend beyond these measures. The pro-gun-control Law Center to Prevent Violence so approves the state’s gun control efforts that, in its [Gun Law State Scorecard](#), it ranks Illinois eighth out of the fifty states.

In an October 19, 2016 presidential campaign debate against Democratic Presidential Nominee Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump criticized gun control in Chicago in response to a question regarding his opposition to limits on either assault weapons or high-capacity magazines and his support for a national right to carry law. Trump suggested that gun control is not the solution to violence in the city. In particular, Trump [declared](#) that, “In Chicago, which has the toughest gun laws in the United States, probably you could say by far, they have more gun violence than any other city.” Making his position on guns more clear, Trump followed up with this statement: “I am a very strong supporter of the Second Amendment.” Yet, here is Trump less than a year later sending in a newly created ATF strike force to help Chicago police confiscate guns (and to further punish the people who have possessed those guns), all in the name of reducing violence in the city. An explanation is in order.

Even if the US government attempts to prevent the ATF from aiding in the confiscation of guns based on state and local gun control measures, the ATF’s integrated action with the local police and state prosecutors on gun matters can be expected to unavoidably aid such confiscations, as well as related arrests and prosecutions. Now imagine a totally independent ATF presence in Chicago focused on enforcing only US gun laws — a much different mandate than the one that has been presented to the public. Under such a mandate, the ATF’s actions would still significantly aid the local and state gun confiscation and prosecution efforts. The ATF, by taking on some gun matters that the Chicago police and state prosecutors would otherwise deal with, would free up resources so that these police and prosecutors can engage in more gun confiscations and prosecutions related to alleged state and local law violations than they otherwise could.

To the extent the ATF is assisting in enforcing gun control laws that go beyond US gun control laws, it is acting in contravention of the US government's gun policy. Consider state and local police in states that have legalized medical or recreational marijuana. They would be acting properly if they refuse to assist the US government in advancing the enforcing of US marijuana laws against people who are acting in compliance with the liberalized state laws. Similarly, agents of the US government should not assist state prosecutors or local police in enforcing gun laws that are more restrictive than the gun laws that have been adopted via the US government's legislative process.

It would be naïve to trust that Chicago will be the only city in which we will see the Trump administration inserting US government agents to help local police. Sending the ATF strike force to Chicago appears to be a test case for Trump who [campaigned on](#), and has [promoted](#) since his early days in the presidency, bringing "law and order" to cities where he says there is too much murder or violent crime. How far might Trump escalate US government involvement, in Chicago and beyond? Ron Paul, in a Monday Ron Paul Liberty Report [discussion](#) of the Trump administration's Chicago actions, suggested the US government may in the future even send in the US military and implement martial law in the name of fighting crime in America.

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