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## Obama shoots blanks on gun control

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President Obama shot himself in the foot over gun control but you probably haven't heard much about it. The president has been a staunch supporter of gun control for his entire public career. In the wake of the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre, he called on Congress to pass gun control legislation and acted unilaterally, issuing 23 executive orders to address what he termed "the broader epidemic of gun violence in this country."

Obama didn't get his wish list: No "assault weapons" ban was forthcoming from Congress and high-capacity magazines are still readily available. What did he get? This is where it gets interesting.

One of the 23 executive orders the president issued on Jan. 23 instructed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention "to research the causes and prevention of gun violence." The Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, to which the CDC gave the research problem, completed the project in a matter of months.

But the data regarding gun violence did not reinforce the beliefs of the gun-banning political class. It went in the opposite direction. The study found that virtually everything the pro-gun movement was saying after Sandy Hook was true.

It turns out that the majority of firearms deaths in the United States from 2000 to 2010 — 61 percent of them — were suicides. Comparatively, the types of mass shootings that gave rise to the study in the first place are exceedingly rare. According to the study, "since 1983 there have been 78 events in which four or more individuals were killed by a single perpetrator" on the same day in the United States. These mass shootings resulted in 547 deaths over 27 years, or an average of 20 per year.

There were more than 200,000 gun-related suicides from 2000-10, for an average of more than 18,500 per year. The gun-rights lobby was right: We have a mental health problem.

Supporters of gun rights have also repeatedly said that guns are necessary for self-protection. The study confirmed this as well, stating, "Almost all national survey estimates indicate that defensive gun uses by victims are at least as common as offensive uses by criminals." More striking than this, the study concluded that those who defend themselves with firearms are considerably less likely to be injured or killed than those who do not.

According to Gallup, households that reported owning at least one gun declined 11 percent from 1980 to 2010. Over the same period, the gun homicide rate fell by almost 50 percent. Of course, there was a ban on certain "assault weapons" during part of that period. That ban was lifted in 2004. What happened then? Gun homicide rates declined very slightly. Perhaps most tellingly, the non-fatal firearm crime rate declined by 80 percent from 1993 through 2010. Says who? The federal government.

Honest politicians, like honest researchers, should go where the data take them. Obama has, instead, consistently tried to solve "problems" he knew full well we did not have. And if he and his allies in Congress and the states are not trying to solve a legitimate problem, they are simply attempting to disarm the American public. Why?

Perhaps someone should demand a study.

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