
UNITED STATES

CRIME & VIOLENCE

Armed and Dangerous



Military weapons training: the police and the military are allowed to carry weapons for protection and to keep law and order. But why does the public also need guns?

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**MP3 AUDIO TEXT**

LAST December, a 12-year-old boy in Colorado accidentally shot himself. He had been hunting for Christmas presents when he found a loaded gun behind the Christmas tree. He started playing with it and it went off. Luckily for him the bullet hit him in the leg and he survived. But it

could have been a lot worse.

On average, nine children die from gun violence every day in the United States. Along with those children, 75 adults also lose their lives after being shot. That means that one person dies from gun violence in the US about every 17 minutes! Of course, there will always be crime and violence — but wouldn't there be a lot less if it wasn't so easy to buy a gun?

You'd think that Americans would want to change the way firearms are bought and sold. The truth is that it's actually becoming less difficult to get a gun. A recent survey by the Associated Press found that during the last two years 24 US states have passed 47 new laws making it easier to get hold of a gun.

Surely this doesn't make any sense. Americans are usually very careful about

health and safety. There is, however, one very simple reason why it's easier to get armed and dangerous in America: the NRA, the National Rifle Association.

The NRA works hard for the US gun industry. It often uses 'patriotic' words to sell the idea that owning deadly weapons is a good thing. And it doesn't stop with words. Since 1990, groups led by the NRA have given more than \$21,000,000 to Congress. In other words, they've been 'buying' politicians. In return, the politicians have helped block laws about gun control. It's also no surprise that 80 per cent of the politicians who received the NRA's \$21 million are members of the Republican Party.

While the NRA pays politicians to make sure Americans can buy lots of weapons — people are dying! In 2006 alone, 3,184 children and teenagers were killed by guns. But America is the land of the free, isn't it? At least, so they tell us. But how free are you when people with enough money can 'buy' politicians? In many other countries doing this kind of thing would be criminal.

In some parts of America it is now legal to carry a concealed [hidden] weapon — while in other parts of the US you can keep a weapon in your car. And in states such as Tennessee and Arizona

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