



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



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Guns and Lilies

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Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. Lately, I have written several reports about the Idaho Panhandle. I thought you might be interested in two local newspaper items about some goings-on up here. First, an article in the *Coeur d' Alene Press* headlined with, "Police discourage guns at work."¹

The police spokesperson said, "You always want to discourage a shootout." Who would disagree? Most people do not like shootouts for the simple reason they are not allowed to carry guns. The shootout they come across in their local mall places them at a logistical disadvantage.

This article appeared because on December 26, a would-be robber of a near-by tobacco shop was killed by the store clerk. The robber was armed with an unloaded pellet gun. The clerk was armed with a .40-caliber semiautomatic and shot the robber 10 times.

The pellet gun was designed to resemble a real pistol (a Walther P-9 semiautomatic), and the newspapers reported the clerk---versed in selling cigarettes, but not armaments---could not tell the difference between a pellet gun and a real gun. The clerk, being a cautious sort, decided to take no chances and drilled several holes into the robber.

One of the reports questioned why the clerk shot the robber 10 times?² The concern was about "overkill," and the "disproportionate use of force," well-used terms in court cases dealing with killings; even self-defense killings.

First, a semiautomatic is so-named because it can fire-off, say, ten shots in a couple heartbeats---leading to the cessation of heartbeats. Second, if I had been that clerk, with a gun pointed at me, my disposition would be *not* to leave any bullets inside the gun. They do little good inside the gun chamber. They are more effective if they are inside the robber. Third, facing an armed person and engaging in a debate about the abstract notion of "disproportionate use of force" is sure-fire way (ha) to find oneself pushing up lilies.

The police spokesperson stated the incident may have been one of those cases, "...where it was justifiable to have a gun at work." Yes. The smoke shop had been robbed, "several times in the past."

I have come across articles about the issue of "like force." Using a tool of deterrence that is comparable, but not greater than the tool of aggression. I read where a special interest group in Washington stated a person who is being robbed should not use force beyond that of the robber's force.

¹ Brian Walker, "Police Discourage Guns at Work," *Coeur d' Alene Press*, December 29, 2006, A1.

² Benjamin Shors, "Sad Story, Tragic End," *The Idaho Spokesman-Review*, December 29, 2005, A1.

Hm. You cannot shoot a robber who is yielding a pellet gun---which may be empty---with anything more lethal than a pellet gun. Furthermore, you have to shoot the robber with an empty pellet gun.

- *Honey, there's a robber in the kitchen!*
- *What type of arms is he bearing?*
- *Dunno. Looks like a 22.*
- *All I have is a 45. Let's get atta here!*

Fortunately for 7/11 clerks and homeowners, this idea has received little support in our Nation's Capital. ...But it has been discussed.

Let's face it, like immigration, pervasive, rational gun control in this country is a moot point. It is too late. So, arm yourself. If you are a 7-11 clerk, a school teacher, a supervisor, a fellow student---just about anyone---Uncle Sam and the NRA are not going to protect you.

I own guns. I like shooting guns, and I'm an accurate shooter. (House breakers and McDonald's stalkers, take note.) I do not favor the unobtainable notion of outlawing the ownership of all guns. Just the kinds of guns that penetrate protective clothing worn by police. I cannot see any reason for owning an AK-47, an AR-15, or a UZI to kill a deer.

The shooting at the tobacco shop was a tragic incident. The robber had no police record. He was a dedicated father and husband who had fallen on hard times. Losing his job some time ago, he had failed to find employment sufficient to support his family.

Why didn't he try employment at places like McDonald's? I've seen "Help Wanted" signs in several stores in this area. Perhaps pride kept him from flipping hamburgers. Most likely, minimum wage would not support his wife, children (six of them) and himself. His family was about to be evicted from their apartment. Who knows? Maybe he had watched too many TV robberies.

What are the answers to this sad episode? Given America's gun culture, the influence of lobbies, my insistence and others on protecting ourselves, and our overall "gun-toting" traditions, I cannot think of any. As I wrote in *PEACE*, guns are here to stay.

Notwithstanding my gun-toting nature, who should be pushing up lilies? The clerk or the pellet gun robber? Neither. But the robber made a mistake by walking into an already threatened store with a seemingly dangerous weapon. For his mistake, he's doing the lily pushing, and his family will long suffer his error.

The store clerk deserves a medal for bravery as well as a bonus for hazardous duty pay. I cannot fathom how these folks make it through their working day.

Truth is, I think I was safer in many of the war zones in Vietnam in the 1960s than visiting an American 7/11 urban store in the 2000s. I am not into dissing my country, but it must be said that

I do not feel this way when I visit convenience stores in other parts of the world. What that says about our country, I leave it to you to let me know. I look forward to your insights.

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