Cash and Carry: How Concealed Carry Laws Drive Gun Industry Profits

In the wake of the July 13, 2013 jury verdict finding George Zimmerman not guilty in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, much of the focus has been on Florida’s 2005 “Stand Your Ground” law. Regardless of the law’s effect in Florida and other states that have adopted it, the stark reality is that it is Florida’s lax concealed weapons law that allowed George Zimmerman to carry a black seven-shot Kel-Tec PF-9 9mm pistol in public and shoot Trayvon Martin.1 If Florida did not have this dangerous National Rifle Association-promoted law, Trayvon Martin would be alive today.

The ad above for the Kel-Tec PF-9 like Zimmerman’s appeared in the NRA’s January 2012 America’s 1st Freedom (the organization’s monthly activist magazine) and features an array of the pistols in different finishes. It urges readers to “Pick your favorite color.”

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Whether for home protection or self-defense, the new Beretta Nano is more than just a safe choice. For starters it has a Striker Deactivation Button, meaning you’ll never have to pull the trigger for disassembly. There are no external levers. No sharp corners. Nothing to snag. Nothing to slow you down. Designed for all skill levels—and for use with any hand—it’s the most innovative micro-compact carry pistol you’ll find.

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Described by its manufacturer as being designed with “maximum concealability in mind,” the PF-9 is “one of the lightest and flattest 9mm ever made.” An ad for a similar Kel-Tec concealed carry pistol, the P-32, in the July 2011 issue of *Guns & Weapons for Law Enforcement* features the handgun lying on a table next to the owner’s car keys and spare change. Characterizing the handgun as “compact protection,” the ad warns, “Don’t leave home without it!” On its website Kel-Tec states that it specializes in “handguns for concealed carry by law enforcement personnel and qualified citizens....” All of the company’s employees are members of the National Rifle Association.²

The gun used to kill Trayvon Martin didn’t find its way into George Zimmerman’s hands by happenstance. Like the killing itself, it is the predictable result of an aggressive decades-long campaign by the National Rifle Association to promote concealed carry laws and attendant “Stand Your Ground” laws. The primary and intended beneficiary of these laws has been the firearms industry. Faced with a steady decline in household gun ownership over the past 30 years,⁴ such laws have created sales opportunities for a gun industry constantly looking to identify new potential customers or resell old ones. As former NRA chief lobbyist Tanya Metaksa proclaimed to the *Wall Street Journal* in 1996 in discussing the organization’s efforts to pass lax concealed carry laws:

> “The gun industry should send me a basket of fruit—our efforts have created a new market.”⁵

Soon after, a headline in the gun industry magazine *Shooting Industry* described the effect of these laws bluntly:  “More Gun Permits Equal More Gun Sales.”⁶ A later article advised gun dealers, “It's time to jump in on the defensive handgun market if you haven't already.”⁷

Pro-gun author and expert Massad Ayoob⁸ summed up how this marketing shift in the 1990s changed the American gun market:

> “I recently was leafing through an issue of *Shooting Industry* from 1971. Talk about a blast from the past! A quarter century later, things have changed dramatically. In *SI* back then, it appeared that shotguns and .22s were the mainstay of the firearms business. A firearms retailer today knows that...that type of sporting market is stagnant at best. The guns that are selling during this sales trough in the industry are defensive firearms, particularly handguns thanks to reformed ‘shall issue’ concealed carry rules in several states....

> “Defensive firearms, sold with knowledgeable advice and the right accessories, offer the best chance of commercial survival for today's retail firearms dealer.”⁹

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³ See [http://keltecweapons.com/about/](http://keltecweapons.com/about/).
⁸ See [http://massadayoobgroup.com/?page_id=165](http://massadayoobgroup.com/?page_id=165) for biography.
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Years earlier, in an article entitled “‘Trend Crimes’ and the Gun Dealer,” Ayoob had advised using fear to sell more guns on “impulse,” stating:

“Customers come to you every day out of fear. Fear of what they read in the newspaper. Fear of what they watch on the 11 o’clock news. Fear of the terrible acts of violence they see on the street. Your job, in no uncertain terms, is to sell them confidence in the form of steel and lead.”

Little has changed since those days. Fear of “acts of violence they see on the street” has been leavened by the gun lobby and gun industry with fear of terrorist attack, economic collapse, civil unrest, the United Nations, and the presidency of Barack Obama. Today, concealed carry handguns—also frequently referred to as “personal defense” handguns in gun industry publications and the ads of handgun manufacturers—dominate (along with assault rifles) the firearms market in the United States.

And the effects of this campaign can be measured in gun industry dollars. For example, Smith & Wesson announced in June 2013 that its handgun sales were up 36.1 percent over the previous fiscal year, citing “the growth in the concealed carry marketplace” as a primary factor.

The following excerpts, taken from the gun industry publication *Shooting Industry*, offer examples as numerous as they are consistent of the important role concealed carry and “personal defense” handguns play in gun sales in the United States.

- “Self-defense buyers—whether they are concealed-carry citizens or family folks concerned about home security—come to your shop bearing long-term sales potential…If you don’t have a display case or counter clearly devoted to self-defense, then flag selected products with bright placards stating ‘Great Choice for Concealed Carry’ or ‘Top Pick for Home Defense.’”

- “[According to Mark Kresser, CEO of handgun manufacturer Taurus International], ‘The buying trends of most people have shifted quite dramatically over the past four or five years. The products that are selling throughout the year have shifted. For instance, the cycles for sales of hunting products have been shortened dramatically, which requires a tremendous amount of planning and research to make sure you hit it right. However, in home security and concealed carry, it’s a year-round business…the economy is certainly something we have been lucky to escape, especially in the areas of home security and concealed carry.’”

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11 Smith & Wesson Holding Corporation, Annual Report (Form 10-K), at 34 (June 25, 2013).
When you carry the best, nothing stands in the way of doing what you love most. With more than 25 years of superior engineering and unrivaled reliability, GLOCK is a defense partner you can trust. Ensure confidence is at your side every step of the way.

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America's 1st Freedom, May 2013
“Scaled-down guns are the hot ticket for 2011, and many of the new guns introduced earlier in the year are beginning to appear on dealers’ shelves. Almost every major manufacturer has a firearm that is reduced in size or designed for concealed carry, which is great news for women looking for pocket-sized self-defense guns, and long guns created with small-stature individuals in mind.”14

Ads for these guns are ubiquitous in gun fanzines and industry publications (the sample ads cited below, plus additional ads through 2012, are included in the Attachment to this report).

- A full-page ad in the March 2009 issue of Gun World for the “6-shot, .380 auto Micro Desert Eagle” from Magnum Research, Inc. warns “Never Walk Alone.” The gun is “…the ultimate in compact personal protection. Small enough to nest comfortably at home, in a pocket or in a purse, the double action only Micro Eagle is proudly made in the U.S. and weighs less than 14 oz….Which only goes to prove that good things do indeed come in small packages.”

- The back cover of the same issue contains an ad for the Taurus Model 856 small-frame revolver with the headline: “6 Shot Capacity. Delivers 20% More Firepower.” A free one-year membership to the NRA comes with the purchase of the gun.

- A full-page ad from Heizer Defense for “The world’s smallest & lightest .45 ACP concealed carry pistol on the market today” in the January 2012 issue of Gun World touts the DoubleTap, “the Titanium Tactical Pocket Pistol.” The ad promises that the “future of concealed carry firepower is now in your hands!”

- A full-page ad in the September 2011 issue of Guns & Weapons for Law Enforcement for the Sig Sauer 9mm P290 Subcompact states, “Get 9mm firepower in a palm-sized, easy-to-carry polymer package.”

- A full-page ad in the April 2006 issue of Guns & Weapons for Law Enforcement for the Heckler & Koch P2000 SK pistol states “Conceal: Accuracy, Reliability, Firepower, Performance, Handling, Ruggedness” and promises “Everything you expect from Heckler & Koch in a lightweight carry gun…The P2000 SK is the ultimate concealed carry pistol.”

- A full-page ad in the August 2011 issue of Guns & Ammo for the Ruger LCR (Lightweight Compact Revolver) features a woman alone at night, looking behind her, the revolver drawn and ready to be fired.

- A full-page ad in the February 2012 issue of Gun World features two Ruger pistols that are “both perfect for personal protection.” The Ruger LCP “is a compact .380 Auto pistol that weighs just 9.40 ounces (with an empty magazine). It is lightweight and ideal for all-day carry—ensuring you have it when and where you need it.” The larger Ruger 9mm LC9 “features smooth ‘melted

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NSSF SHOT Business, December 2012
edges for ease of holstering, carrying and drawing.” The ad urges the reader to “check out the Ruger LCP and LC9 with Lasermax Centerfire Lasers!”

■ An ad in the December 2011 issue of Gun World for North American Arms’ mini-revolver promises, “Regardless of your location, your dress or the season, NO gun is easier to carry or conceal than a North American Arms mini-revolver. Is it an effective deterrent? Would you want to be shot with one?” The ad warns the reader “don’t leave home without one” and adds, “Remember Rule #1: Have a gun!”

Ironically, while concealed carry organizations and advocates often display hostility toward law enforcement both in word\(^{15}\) and deed,\(^{16}\) gun manufacturers and dealers promote the use of specific models and manufacturers utilized by police in their marketing efforts to private citizens.

■ “‘The law enforcement connection is important, as is the military connection,’ [Colorado gun dealer Ray] Sanchez explained. ‘People want to carry and use handguns designed for the extreme conditions of police or military use. So we carry what our local officers want, but they are vastly outnumbered by civilian buyers—defensive shooters, concealed-carry handgunners, competitive shooters.’ Sanchez says the consistency and sheer enthusiasm generated by civilian tactical shooters keeps ‘our sales numbers growing out of sight…There’s no secret to our success. We sell fighting handguns, long guns, accessories and ammunition. Sporting arms are few and usually multi-use.’”\(^{17}\)

■ “When it comes to self-defense and home protection, citizens want to rely on the gear cops rely on. Aside from the obvious sales-promoting points—like reference to the safety, handling and function testing carried out by L.E. [law enforcement] agencies selecting firearms—many savvy civilians believe that using the same guns and ammunition used by police officers provides them a degree of protection from liability lawsuits if they ever wind up using those firearms and ammo in lethal-threat situations. Too, the ‘law-enforcement connection’ allows dealers to, in effect, let public agencies do their product promotions for them. Every L.E. agency press release announcing the adoption of a weapon, accessory or ammunition should be seen as an advertisement you don’t have to write yourself, and a ‘field evaluation’ you can quote from an objective professional source.”\(^{18}\)

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Gun World, April 2013
A full-page ad for the Sig Sauer Tactical P229 pistol in the May 2011 issue of *Guns & Weapons for Law Enforcement* features the handgun under the headline “Standard Issue” and promises that it is “Dedicated to protect and serve. Just like the officers who carry it.” On the opposite page is an ad for Kahr Arms’ PM9 pistol, which features a woman holding the handgun under the headline “Thin is Sexy.” The ad promises, “Nothing fits better undercover.”

With concealed carry laws now in place in all 50 states (only the District of Columbia prohibits concealed carry) the gun lobby and firearm manufacturers have now turned their attention from individual statehouses to the U.S. Capitol. Legislation has been considered in Congress that would allow concealed handgun permit holders like George Zimmerman to carry their guns outside their home states and across the nation. The result would be that states such as New York and California that tightly regulate who can carry a gun would be forced to allow people with concealed carry permits issued by Florida and other states with minimal regulation to carry guns into their states—holding the residents of states with strong gun laws hostage to other states’ lax laws. And while pro-gun advocates will inevitably voice their support of these bills in terms of self-defense and individual rights, truly the greatest beneficiary of national concealed carry stands to be the gun industry.

Across America, hundreds of innocent citizens and families have been decimated, their communities shaken, by concealed carry killers acting as judge, jury, and executioner—all in the name of the gun industry’s bottom line.19

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19 No comprehensive data exists on non-self defense killings by private citizens legally allowed to carry concealed handguns. The Violence Policy Center’s *Concealed Carry Killers* project offers examples from May 2007 to the present of such incidents, which are taken from news reports and the limited state data available. These examples are only an unknown fraction of the unreported number of similar incidents that routinely occur across the nation. Currently, *Concealed Carry Killers* documents 381 incidents in 32 states resulting in 516 deaths. In 81 percent of the incidents (307) the concealed carry killer committed suicide (132), has already been convicted (131), perpetrated a murder-suicide (36), or was killed in the incident (eight). Of the 62 cases still pending, the vast majority (52) of concealed carry killers have been charged with criminal homicide, four were deemed incompetent to stand trial, and six incidents are still under investigation. An additional 12 incidents were fatal unintentional shootings involving the gun of the concealed handgun permit holder. At least 14 of the victims were law enforcement officers. Twenty-four of the incidents were mass shootings, resulting in the deaths of 107 victims. Figures cited are current as of July 2013 and are updated regularly (http://www.vpc.org/ccwkillers.htm).
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Gun World, February 2012
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Gun World, February 2012
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Gun World, December 2011
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Guns & Ammo, August 2011
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Guns & Weapons for Law Enforcement, September 2011
Guns & Weapons for Law Enforcement, July 2011

Guns & Weapons for Law Enforcement, May 2011

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Gun World, March 2009
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Gun World, March 2009
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