

Gun Sales Are Up, and Some See Link To Obama Re-Election Fears

Written by AP Wire

Thursday, 08 March 2012 10:43



Gun sales are booming.

Enthusiasts are stocking up on guns and ammunition, and some in the industry are wondering whether sales are spiking as they did after Democrat Barack Obama won the presidency in 2008.

That rush created a nationwide shortage.

“We’re at the top of the roller coaster and we’re about to plummet down the side,” said DeWayne Irwin, owner of the Cheaper Than Dirt gun store in north Fort Worth, which set a sales record for the month of February. “It’s fixing to happen again. I don’t know if it will be to the same extent it was before, but I see it coming.

“Look who the Republicans are trying to put against Obama,” he said. “It’s the Keystone Kops, and people are getting scared. People are terrified he’s going to get re-elected and then he won’t care about getting votes next time. He’ll just pass whatever legislation he wants.”

Some say the uptick in sales at gun stores could also be linked to anything from the arrival of tax refunds to a spending spree by fans of the National Geographic Channel’s “Doomsday Preppers” show, which chronicles people preparing for the end of the world.

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Nationwide, more people than ever are buying firearms.

Last year, the FBI received more than 16.3 million inquiries from people running criminal background checks on potential gun buyers. That's up from 12.7 million in 2008 and 11.4 million in 2007, FBI records show.

Texas had around 1 million such requests in each of the past four years, the second most, behind Kentucky, which had nearly double that. Officials say Kentucky's numbers are high because fresh background checks are run every month there on gun owners with concealed-weapons permits.

"I'm constantly getting questions from people in the gun community about this (issue)," said Alan Korwin, author of nine gun law books, including "Gun Laws of America," and operator of gunlaws.com. "People are concerned that if Obama wins, as a lame duck, he will go after firearms in a way we have never seen before.

"We saw a fire sale when he was elected last time," he said. "But the speculation is that now ... with his need to get re-elected gone, the sky is the limit on attacking the Second Amendment."

Before taking office, Obama said he respected the constitutional right to bear arms. In 2007, after more than three dozen Chicago children had been killed, he also said he wanted to restore the ban on assault weapons.

In the days and weeks after the 2008 election, people began stocking up on firearms and ammunition, eventually creating a shortage. It took nearly a year for supplies to become more plentiful and for prices, which spiked because of the demand, to come down.

President Bill Clinton signed the last so-called assault weapons ban on Sept. 13, 1994, and it expired 10 years later. Just months after he signed the ban, voters went to the polls and the House and Senate flipped from Democratic to Republican control.

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When the assault weapons ban came up in Congress for reauthorization in 2004, the measure failed.

“It’s bad politics to be on the wrong side of the Second Amendment at election time,” Wayne LaPierre, executive vice president of the National Rifle Association, has said.

U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder has said the Obama administration “has consistently favored the reinstatement of the assault weapons ban. It is something that we think was useful in the past with regard to the reduction that we’ve seen in crime and certainly would have a positive impact on our relationship and the crime situation in Mexico.”

Fort Worth’s Mark Greene, a hunter and former member of Gun Owners for Obama, said he’s tired of people using this argument to influence Obama’s re-election bid.

“I still own guns and I still support Obama,” he said. “And I still have very little in common with the fear-mongers and bunker-mentality gun nuts who will tell any lie they think they can get away with to try and bring down this president they hate so vehemently and irrationally.”

Some in the industry cite a variety of reasons for the rise in gun and ammo sales, including that manufacturers are doing better marketing guns - primarily pink ones - to women.

But a big reason may be politics.

A prominent businessman recently shopped at Cheaper Than Dirt, saying that “Republicans don’t have a prayer against Obama” this year. That man, Irwin said, spent \$25,000 on ammunition, magazines and other gun paraphernalia.

“The folks paying attention to the political climate think this might be an opportunity to stock up,”

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Irwin said.

John Woods, who has lobbied for legislation to keep guns off college campuses, said many fears surfacing are unwarranted.

“The gun lobby has long known that fear is a remarkable marketing and fundraising tool,” said Woods, a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin who attended Virginia Tech and lost his girlfriend in the 2007 shooting there that claimed 33 lives. “But the Supreme Court ruled recently that the Second Amendment is an individual right, so that fear is completely misplaced.”

Not everyone is stocking up.

Robert Chafin, who lives in Denton County, says he was among those who stocked up during Clinton’s presidency.

“I stockpiled a variety of firearms that I feared might not be available in the future,” he said. “As it turned out, in the wake of the disaster that befell the Democratic Party in the ‘94 elections, attacks on firearms ownership evaporated as Democrats learned a painful lesson. And it appears they have remembered that lesson.”

That’s why he isn’t stockpiling right now, he said, even though Obama’s “administration has waged an oblique war on gun owners.”

He and others point to the Operation Fast and Furious gun-smuggling investigation.

Officials say it was intended to track down and break up groups of people running guns to Mexican drug cartels.

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But Chafin says the effort was simply “trying to build a case for banning private sales.”

“I’m sure that Barack Obama himself would institute a total ban on gun ownership if he could,” Chafin said. “(But) he would never be able to put together any sort of consensus in Congress for additional restrictions on private firearms ownership.”

He also pointed to several high-profile court rulings - from invalidating the handgun ban in Washington, D.C., to quashing the handgun ban in Chicago - that he believes will protect gun rights regardless of who is in the White House.

As Obama seeks a second term, groups such as Ammo.net are calling the president “the greatest gun salesman in America.”

“American firearm sales and concealed handgun permit applications are at all-time highs since the 2008 election of President Obama,” according to a graphic on Ammo.net. “The increase in Americans purchasing firearms has meant massive increases in sales by gun makers, billions more in federal and state collections related to firearms and ammunition, and hundreds of thousands of new Americans carrying concealed handguns.

“Given these increases, should the firearms industry support President Obama for a second term or not?”

January was the 20th straight month of increases in firearm background checks. States such as Utah saw a 161 percent increase in the number of concealed-weapon permits from March 2008 to March 2011. And Glock sales in the U.S. grew 71 percent in the first quarter of fiscal 2010, according to the ad.

In Texas, the number of concealed-handgun permits has gone up every year, nearly doubling since 2006.

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“I think the president being called ‘the greatest gun salesman in America’ has more to do with him being a Democrat than anything else,” Woods said.{jcomments on}