

FACTS ABOUT REALCO GUNS - DISTRICT HEIGHTS, MD.

Drawn from "The Hidden Life of Guns" Washington Post Investigation
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To break through the federal secrecy imposed by the Tiahrt Amendment, on the tracing of crime guns which was passed by an act of Congress and signed by President George W. Bush in 2003, the Washington Post obtained hundreds of thousands of state and local police records and did its own tracing and analysis. To develop Maryland statistics, the Post took records of handgun sales from a state database of more than 35,000 gun traces and cross-referenced them against lists of gun serial numbers from police evidence logs in the District and Prince George's County.

SOME FINDINGS OF THIS INVESTIGATION.

1. From 1992 through 2010, 86 guns sold by Realco were linked to homicide cases, far outstripping the totals from any other store in the region. In that same period police recovered 2,534 guns sold by Realco including over 300 used in non-fatal shootings, assaults and robberies.
2. In Maryland, Realco towers over the other 350 handgun dealers in the state as a source of guns confiscated in the District and Prince George's County. Nearly one out of three guns the Post traced to Maryland dealers came from Realco. The rest were spread among other shops across the state.
3. "The owners of Realco Guns are cooperative with our detectives and have been compliant with all reporting requirements," said Maj. Andy Ellis, [former] commander of the public affairs division of the Prince George's police. "It shows a weakness in our system when a company like Realco can adhere to the law yet still be the source of so many crime guns. I can only imagine how much lower our violent crime rate would be if Realco sold shoes instead of guns," he said.
4. The criminal demand for weapons especially new ones that cannot be tied to previous crimes puts gun dealers at the front line of crime prevention. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) looks to merchants to proactively weed out suspicious customers, such as a girlfriend buying for a boyfriend. We know that 1% of gun dealers across the U. S. are responsible for close to 60% of all guns used in crime.

5. Police in the District and Prince George's on average seized more than 160 Realco guns annually from 1997 through 2008. Realco's firearms ended up at local crime scenes at a rate nearly twice that of any other active Maryland dealer that had 10 or more guns seized.

6. The Post identified Realco as the source of 493 guns used in crime from 1996 to 1998, based on data from the ATF. That was twice the number of any other dealer in the region. **Researchers ranked Realco in the top 10 in the nation for crime gun traces.**

7. In August, 2007, DC police issued a report that identified the leading sources of crime guns seized in DC in 2006. Realco was No. 1 with 76. Three times the number of the next most frequent dealer.

8. Over the 18 years from 1992-2010, one out of every 8 guns sold by Realco turned up at a crime scene.

These facts reveal an unbroken pattern of selling crime guns which does not have to continue. Mr. Carlos del Real, owner of Realco, could change this pattern by signing the 10 Points for Responsible Retailer Partnership, a voluntary code which would virtually eliminate straw purchasing and other means of illegal gun trafficking. To date, he has refused to sign the code.

WHY HEEDING IS IN FRONT OF REALCO GUNS

Heeding God's Call in Greater Washington and its members are not opposed to guns. We have never said, nor will we ever say, that people should not have guns. We recognize that a gun store is a legitimate business. We affirm the Second Amendment and acknowledge an individual's right to "keep and bear arms" is the law of the land. Several members of HGC are gun owners.

Guns are not the issue; *illegal guns* are the issue. . . i.e. those guns which Realco has sold "legally" for more than 18 years, but which have consistently ended up in the hands of a criminal element and those who could not pass a background check. We do not believe it is a coincidence that Realco has infinitely more guns found at crime scenes than any other gun shop in Maryland. One out of every eight guns sold ends up in crime is

much too large a ratio. And Realco is not the largest seller of guns.

Having Realco, a business within the city limits of District Heights, ranked as one of the top ten gun stores in the United States associated with crime guns should weigh on the minds of public-minded people throughout the Greater Washington area. It should be a grave concern particularly for all the citizens of District Heights, especially its faith community.

Because too many of God's precious children have died and been maimed by illegal guns traced to Realco, Heeding God's Call in Greater Washington has been conducting weekly vigils every Monday afternoon since June 2011. We are there because human life is sacred and gun violence is abhorrent to Almighty God; No community should accept it.

We are present every Monday because we know the deaths and injuries do not need to continue. Citizens who are aware can stop the violence which is quickly becoming a kind of religion in America. The deaths will continue unless Mr. del Real changes his business practices. We have presented him with the opportunity to sign a voluntary code of conduct which would in fact eliminate straw purchasing and other ways by which lethal weapons fall into violent hands. This voluntary code is the one agreed to by the nation's largest gun dealer, Wal-Mart, and Mayors Against Illegal Guns. To sign this code would not harm his business; it would enhance it and overnight make Mr. del Real an excellent role model and leader, which would not go unnoticed by everyone in this community.

We are not trying to put Mr. del Real out of business. We are saying his business practices which lead to undeniable levels of violence are unacceptable to us and we must share this information with the people of this community. They have a right to know.

Our public action is nonviolent; it is just; it is needed; it will save lives; and we believe we are doing God's work. We will tell the truth and we will strive to make District Heights and Greater Washington itself a more loving community. We respectfully ask for the understanding and down-to-earth support of the City Council. This support can best be expressed by the approval of a waiver of the permit fee for our public assembly.