

# 64 The Worldwide Gun Owner's Guide

Reviewed by Barrett Tillman

Alan Korwin is unique in Arizona marksmanship circles. He's publisher of the plain-English series of U.S. and state firearms laws, the encyclopedia of 92 Supreme Court gun cases, and the definitive text on the *Heller* case that confirmed the 2nd Amendment as an individual right.

Now Alan's Bloomfield Press has gone international. *The Worldwide Gun Owner's Guide* is written by Larry Grupp, a globetrotting author who spent nine years not only obtaining the firearms laws of 64 nations, but also visiting most of them. Therefore, his guide represents a rare amalgam of scholarly research with on-scene experience. Throughout the text you'll benefit from Grupp's discussions with an international cast of officials, shooters, gun-shop owners, and other representatives.

The guide's 64 countries represent about one-third of the nation-states currently existing on Planet Earth. Grupp rates them according to several criteria, with a gun-friendly index determining their rankings top to bottom.

Grupp finds that the most gun-friendly place on earth, and therefore the freest, is not really a country. Ostensibly the Khyber Pass region is subject to the same gun laws as the rest of Pakistan (similar to Britain) but nobody pays any attention. According to some observers, the Khyber may have the highest gun-ownership ratio in the world, including full-auto weapons, mortars, grenades and rocket launchers. But before you pack your bags for a move, consider the merc who describes the area as "Uncontrolled anarchy, unfettered by any milk of human compassion."

Among nation-states the highest gun-friendly scores go to Albania, Crete and Luxembourg, all rated at 90 percent or more. The top ten are filled out with Switzerland, San Marino, Finland, New Zealand, the US and Lichtenstein. However, Albania's rating is skewed because it retains highly restrictive laws that are widely ignored. When the communist regime collapsed, thousands of citizens helped themselves to government arsenals. Crete also has unfriendly gun laws that are ignored. (Before you turn to Wikipedia, San Marino is a teeny-tiny enclave in Italy: 30,000 people living in 24 square miles.)

At the bottom of the list are Columbia, Japan, China and Vietnam, all rated under 10 percent. In fact, Vietnam wins the Brady Bunch Sensible Gun Laws Trophy with a perfect score of 0.

Grupp worked long and hard to obtain basic information on firearms laws. The only two nations that actually provided assistance were Luxembourg and New Zealand. Israel and Norway (which rank far below Iran, Russia and Thailand) replied that information on gun laws is classified!

Each nation's section addresses several subjects: permits and licensing; storage; types and numbers

of permitted guns; reloading equipment; and firearms ownership/use by foreigners. Many, perhaps most, foreign nations that allow private arms require a license to purchase, with paperwork specifying what kinds and how many guns may be owned. The application process ranges between easy and nearly impossible, often depending upon whom you know.

In many nations, membership in an authorized club or organization is required for gun ownership. The fees can range from trivial to oppressive. Frequently an applicant must show a "legitimate purpose" but often "target shooting" is adequate.

A surprising number of countries allow automatic weapons of various types, including Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Oman. However, as noted above, there's often a gap between the written law and what authorities allow. But Grupp's assessment of Oman is an eye-opener: easily the most gun-friendly Muslim nation, thanks to the benign rule of the sultan. In a nation where many people pack, crime is almost non-existent. (Yathink?)

The list of 64 nations obviously contains some gaps, including Saudi Arabia. Until recently the Saudis were extremely gun friendly, at least for adult male citizens. But in 2007 some laws were tightened, reputedly in response to terrorist concerns. However, taken in context with Oman, Muslim nations

can be surprisingly accommodating.

Besides various countries, Grupp evaluates the gun friendliness (or not) of the U.S. military and ships at sea. The latter is particularly interesting in today's piratical world, when Somalis and other sea scoundrels seize ships and crews for ransom. Most nations do not allow privately owned vessels to arm themselves but guess what: no Russian ship has yet been hijacked, and apparently the pirates around the Horn of Africa don't even try very often.

Publisher Korwin concedes that there appears no logic to the chapter sequences (New Zealand, Columbia and Vietnam for instance) but says "If you read front to back, you'll see the line of thinking and continuity the author has built in." However, the book contains a table of contents and an index, so finding specific countries is easy.

Finally, readers will see repeated denigration of the United Nations – a treatment richly deserved for ever so many reasons, spanning decades. But one in particular merits mention: the UN Declaration of Human Rights omits any reference to self defense. It was adopted three years after World War II, when millions of unarmed civilians were slaughtered by "friendly" and foreign governments. Keep that in mind when reading *The Worldwide Gun Owner's Guide* – and appreciate the nations where individuals still may bear arms.

Available at Bloomfield Press at [Gunlaws.com](http://Gunlaws.com). 

